

The First Coming



Why Prophecy Cannot be Understood
Before it is Fulfilled

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Preface to 2012 Edition

This book seeks to demonstrate certain straightforward principles taught by the Bible. A previous edition to this book, after demonstrating these principles, contained a lengthy discussion of the implications that these principles hold for the Second Coming. In this edition I have eliminated this discussion, and replaced it with a short, more direct presentation. The present book is less than half the length of previous editions.

Introduction

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

Matthew 4:18-20

The holy scene immortalized in the above verses speaks to us from across twenty centuries with a message that transcends time and place. The response of the simple fishermen to Christ's words - instant, obedient, unquestioning - is a precious jewel set in the tapestry of our religious experience. It speaks of a divine love and a surrender to that love; an awakening of the spirit of man to the Will of God.

On that day, Peter and Andrew needed no outward proof, no scriptural evidence to persuade them to follow their Lord. They had responded to Him on a deeper level, one that is in no need of such proof.

In this day, however, scriptural proof has become a standard by which many believe they will recognize Christ at His Return. Many feel that the prophecies of the Bible have given them a sure guide to the Second Coming and that through their understanding of them they will know Him. In contrast to the response described by Matthew above, peoples' minds have constructed a test of sorts by which they believe they can distinguish the Christ.

Can prophecies be used for this purpose? Was this God's intention in revealing them? And if not, what is their purpose, and what are the implications for the Second Coming?

This book is an attempt to present evidence in the Bible relating to the purpose of the prophecies of both the Old and New Testaments and the assumptions that have been made about them throughout the ages. It is evidence, which in a sense has been staring us in the face for some two thousand years, but which, until now, could not have been fully appreciated. In this book we will consider it intently, and find that what it reveals is quite unexpected, yet fully understandable, and indeed, a priceless gift.

Chapter 1: The Backwards Principle

Commentary of the Second Coming of Christ is sometimes presented as if the details of this great happening have already been printed in yesterday's newspaper. People speak with such certainty about how He will make His entrance into the world, the great signs that will accompany His arrival, and the spectacular events - some bringing salvation to the Faithful, others damnation to the wicked - which the peoples of the earth will witness with awe. Such accounts include unmistakable conditions that the world will experience at that time, and unequivocal visible signs in the heavens and on earth, both joyous and catastrophic, which will compel the peoples of the earth.

Images of the Second Coming are based, of course, on the prophecies of the Bible, which are regarded by many as quite clearly spelling out future events. These prophecies are seen as assured promises whose meanings are obvious, and which only the blind could fail to see.

While all this certainty seems to be only a matter of reading what the future holds, for God has foretold the Second Coming in the Bible, what people are actually doing is trying to predict the future.

At first sight, of course, it seems rather natural that one would use prophecies to see into the future. Isn't that what prophecies are for? After all, the many prophecies of the Old Testament foretold with accuracy the First Coming of Christ centuries before it occurred. We now look forward to the Second Coming - and we have equally as many prophecies - and they seem, by the way, much clearer than the ones foretelling Christ's First Coming.

Certainly it would seem that predicting the future through prophecy is not only a reasonable thing to do, but even a duty of the faithful, so that they might prepare themselves for the coming of their Lord. And those whose vision of the Second Coming is based upon the words of the Bible should be assured that their vision is correct - except for one unavoidable fact: **there**

is no evidence to support the commonly held assumption that the meaning of prophecies can be understood before they have been fulfilled. Quite the contrary, the evidence of the Bible overwhelmingly demonstrates that until they are fulfilled, prophecies are ignored, misunderstood, and, in many cases, present a barrier between the seeker and his goal.

Having no foreknowledge of the meaning of a prophecy, one cannot, therefore, use it to predict the future. ***It must first be fulfilled for its meaning to be revealed.***

The Backwards Principle

But, isn't that backwards? It must first be fulfilled? Certainly it seems backwards, but this is only because we have assumed that the reverse is true: that prophecies should be fulfilled according to our understanding of them. In other words, in thinking that we know how a prophecy is going to be fulfilled, we are essentially saying that God cannot fulfill it in a different way. This is presumptuous, to say the least.

As surprising as this aspect of prophecy may be, the surprises do not stop here.

Fulfillment is not the only condition necessary for a prophecy to be understood. There is another: namely, ***that the One fulfilling the prophecy must be recognized and accepted by the individual trying to understand the prophecy. That is, one must first recognize and accept Christ as the divine Son of God in order to understand the prophecies that He has fulfilled.***

And there is more: ***These two conditions - fulfillment and recognition - present us with a facet of prophecy that seems to go against yet another commonly held assumption: that prophecy is given to lead one to Christ. This is simply not the case.***

As difficult as this may be to accept, the story of the New Testament leaves us no alternative: for there is no mention of anyone accepting Christ because they understood prophecies given them in sacred scripture. Though we may at first object to this statement - it certainly does go against much of what many of us have been taught, either directly or through implication -

eventually though, after thoughtful investigation, we see much to our surprise that it is true.

Now, even those who do come to this realization may argue of course that just because no one understood the prophecies, it does not necessarily follow that the prophecies were not **meant** to be understood. They may still have had the purpose of leading souls to Christ, but because of the shortcomings of human beings their purpose was not fulfilled. For example, could not the peoples' pride and stubbornness have prevented them from understanding? Certainly this was a factor. But the question then arises, "Was **every** soul at the time of Christ proud and stubborn?" What about the holy souls through whom Christ chose to bring salvation to the masses by imparting His love and teachings? What about His disciples? If even these souls - glorified for centuries by millions, souls who gave their very lives for their love of Christ - could not understand the meaning of the prophecies, what chance would anyone else have of understanding them?

The Purpose of Prophecy

There were many, of course, at the time of Christ who were aware of the prophecies pointing to the Messiah, but the prophecies did not lead them to Christ. This is not to say that the followers of Christ failed to understand the prophecies of the Old Testament that referred to Christ; certainly they understood many of the prophecies, **but only after they were fulfilled**.

It was not their understanding of the prophecies that led them initially to believe in Christ; it was other things. Some were led to believe through dreams (Mat 1:20), some through visions (John 1:33), some through visits from angels (Luke 1:28-32) or the Holy Ghost (Luke 2:26). There were some who recognized that His teachings were from God (Mat 7:28-29), and some who witnessed miraculous things in Him (Jn 7:31). And then there were some who having none of these blessings, simply followed Christ at His words "*Follow me*" (Mat 4:19)¹, and this they did without the least hesitation. Thus, many people came to Christ by different paths, but none, as far as we know, came to Him by way of prophecies. This surprising truth becomes clearer, the more closely we examine scripture.

Christ himself explained the meaning of certain prophecies to His disciples; the meaning of other prophecies were revealed as the events of

¹ All Biblical references are King James Version unless otherwise noted

His noble Life unfolded. A careful look at these prophecies, as they are stated in the Old Testament, reveals the fact that, without exception, the prophecies referring to Christ's First Coming were fulfilled in a manner that could not have been, and indeed were not, predicted by anyone.

Now, this immediately raises some profound questions: Why did God give these prophecies? If the people who received them did not understand what they meant, if the prophecies did not light a clear path to the Christ, what were they for? Why, if none were to be led to Christ through them, wouldn't God have made them clearer, more obvious so that people could have figured them out?

The problem here, of course, is our assumption that prophecies are given to lead us to Christ. This incorrect assumption causes us to ask such troubling questions - questions, however, that miss a vital point: although prophecies did not lead anyone to Christ, nevertheless, many hundreds of millions have understood the prophecies, and have, therefore, benefited from them. The prophecies have thus fulfilled their real purpose though it is a purpose different from what at first might have been expected.

What then is the real reason for the prophecies of the Old Testament, their true purpose? Why were they given to us?

The prophecies of the Old Testament were given for the same purpose all prophecies are given: to confirm the faith of those who already believe. They were given to show the believer that all things lie within the Almighty's grasp; that with Him are the knowledge and destinies of the future and the past. They were given to strengthen the believer against tests of faith which surely come to all believers. Christ's explanations of the meaning of prophecies filled his disciples with divine assurance in the plan of God. This not only confirmed their faith in Him, but prepared them for their future trials and tribulations. And there have no doubt been countless souls since that time who have been lovingly nurtured in their faith in Christ through study of these prophecies which, along with their other vital purposes, reveal to the believer the proper perspective from which we are to view Christ's life and words.

The Necessity of Recognition

The principle of the necessity of recognizing Christ in order to understand prophecies relating to Him, and, thereby being confirmed by these

prophecies, is constantly demonstrated even to this day. Those who already believe in Christ have no problem accepting all of the prophecies referring to Him - even ones he or she has never previously seen or heard. A Christian, for example, opening a Bible that has been annotated to indicate which Old Testament prophecies refer to Christ, will discover with awe and wonder that a verse he or she formerly never noticed definitely refers to Christ; they simply believe, and this belief enables them to see with new eyes, and to understand. This is because they have accepted Christ, the One Who has fulfilled these prophecies. Having thus accepted Him, they regard all aspects of His life as sacred, and view the written record of His life as sacred scripture. And whatever the scripture says, the same is true. To those who have accepted Christ, the words of the New Testament have acquired a divine status, and these words have then become the standard by which all other words are weighed and judged. Once accepting the Bible as the divine standard, all things contained therein are accepted as true.

On the other hand there are many who, to this day, regard not a single prophecy of the Old Testament as having been fulfilled in Christ - not because they have dispassionately examined the evidence we have about Him and His life and compared it with their prophecies, but simply because they do not believe in Him. They read the scriptures, but do not see that the words "mean" Christ. In a way their unbelief is a barrier to their understanding the prophecies.

Generally, everyone who recognizes Christ believes in all the prophecies referring to Him, and no one who disbelieves in Him, believes in any of these prophecies. How else could this phenomenon be explained except that the recognition of Christ is necessary for the understanding of prophecies?

Chapter 2: The Misunderstanding Of Prophecy

The story of Christ's life depicted in the New Testament presents us with example after example of misinterpretation of scripture by both the religious leaders and lay people of His time. This misunderstanding is seen by many to be the cause of the great suffering inflicted not only upon Christ Himself, but also upon His followers. A misunderstanding of prophecy, however, is not harmful in itself. The disciples themselves did not correctly understand the prophecies referring to Christ - in many cases even after He Himself had explained their meaning to them. The problem associated with the misunderstanding of prophecy comes not from the misunderstanding itself, but from our holding to a particular interpretation in the face of fulfillment in a manner that runs counter to our interpretation.

Those, who at the time of Christ, did hold to their own interpretation, despite evidence that the prophecies were being fulfilled in other ways, crucified Him. So great was the faith they placed in their own ability to understand the words and plan of God that their own understanding became in effect their "scripture". Unknowingly, they had let pride obscure their God-given capacity to distinguish the truth. Had any of Christ's disciples blindly held to their particular pre-conceived interpretation of prophecy, that disciple also would have rejected Christ, but they didn't. They struggled to understand and accept the Will of the Heavenly Father, though it is evident from the scriptures that they were gravely shaken by what was happening in their lives. For, although they had been warned in the scriptures regarding the Coming of Christ, there was virtually no way for them to have been fully prepared for what was to come.

How People Prove Their Interpretation

In spite of the evidence the New Testament gives regarding the inability of people to understand prophetic language before it is fulfilled, and the role that prophecy played in confounding and even leading astray those who would interpret it, there are still many people today, who are sure of their interpretation regarding the Second Coming, and feel very secure regarding

what signs will accompany it and what they will look for. I refer here not to any specific group of Christians, or to any particular denomination, but rather to the multitude of Christ's followers from all walks of life, who claim to know what the prophecies mean. And they can "prove" that their interpretation is correct. They do this, of course, by using the Word of God itself.

Some people articulate their reasoning, and for some it is an inner reasoning that is implied in their approach to scripture. And this reasoning, according to my understanding, goes something like this:

"The meaning of the Holy Word is clear and evident. The meaning is based, not on our interpretation, but on what the Bible itself gives as the proper interpretation, knowing that because we are only human, our own interpretation will be flawed, whereas the Bible's explanations are perfect. These interpretations given by the Bible are easy to understand - even obvious to those who are fair minded - once they have been carefully thought upon, or pointed out and explained by someone who understands them.

"A proper interpretation never excludes any part of the Bible, but encompasses all parts. At the same time, recognizing that some aspects of scripture have more relevance to prophecy than others, not all scripture can be given equal weight. That is, a proper interpretation is based on a knowledge of the relative importance of the different aspects of the Bible, and because we have taken into account the Bible in its entirety, our interpretation is not narrow minded.

"The proofs are conclusive and complete, i.e. there are no holes in an interpretation of this kind or things that do not make sense. Of course, there are some things that cannot be known or explained, but these are such things as are only known of God, but surely God has given us enough of His word to enable us to recognize the Christ, when He comes. There are no contradictions in our reasoning. Our interpretation stands on the Revealed Word of God . . . period. So in a sense, it is not our interpretation, but God's interpretation that we are following.

"Regarding the interpretation of others, we can see in the teachings of other Christian Faiths either flaws in their interpretations, or errors in their understanding, or outright disregard for scripture. We understand what others have either overlooked in their study of scripture or what they have added. Unlike others, however, we refuse to tamper with scripture; we know that you can neither add nor subtract from the Word of God.

"In a word, we "follow the scriptures"".

This is seemingly sound reasoning, and one that appears to provide a good foundation for the interpretation of scripture. There is, however, a problem with this: **others use the same reasoning and come up with different results - different interpretations**. Indeed, this reasoning (i.e. that we can figure it all out ourselves), when applied to the practice of religion, has led to Christianity breaking up into thousands of sects, with many, claiming, of course, to be the correct one.

That so many people can be so sure that they correctly understand the prophecies regarding the Second Coming, while at the same time giving widely differing scenarios of the events that will take place (or have already taken place), is in itself the greatest sign of the nature of prophecy: namely that it is a mystery until it is fulfilled.

These Words Constitute a Prophecy

What is the flaw with the reasoning given above? Can the Bible not speak for itself? Of course it can. It does. However, the only thing is, there is no way for us to understand fully what it means - more specifically, there is no way for us to tell which words of the Bible are to be taken literally, and which symbolically. **We can all agree on what it "says", but not on what it "means".**

The Bible rarely states anything to the effect that "These words constitute a prophecy", and never gives us clues such as "this prophecy has a literal meaning" or "this prophecy has a symbolic meaning", or "this prophecy has both a literal and a symbolic meaning" and then goes on to indicate which **words** or **parts** are to be taken literally, and which symbolically. Rather,

prophecies are simply stated, and as we shall see, sometimes without even a clue that they are indeed prophecies.²

Filling In the Details

Along with an inability to distinguish which words should be taken literally, and which words symbolically, another obstacle presents itself before us. Even in the case where the words might have a purely literal meaning and therefore could be understood correctly (if there were some way for us to know that the meaning was purely literal, which there is not), practically all details are absent in the picture given by prophecy. The prophecy uses but a few words, to express what are sometimes great, even magnificent themes or events. This leads to a rather natural, but possibly fatal consequence: we ourselves fill in the details of the picture. We read the words, we make sense out of them, and by this we form a picture of what they mean. This picture, then, becomes our "vision" of what will happen.

Our picture may or may not be the true picture.

The inadequacy and the deceptiveness of forming a picture through words can be easily demonstrated. Simply have a friend get a picture that you have never seen, say, from a magazine, and then have the friend describe it for you. As it is described, you will "see" in your mind an image. Afterwards, take a look at the actual picture. The picture will not be the same as you imagined. As you study it, you will then understand what was "meant" by the words that your friend used to describe it. This is a rather simple experiment, which you may want to try. It demonstrates the inadequacy of words in trying to convey something which can really only be conveyed by the sense of sight. In any case, we're going to try a variation on this right here which will more closely illustrate the subtleties involved in trying to fully understand the meaning of a prophecy before it is fulfilled. Here we will begin not with the picture, but as in the case of our attempting to understand prophecies, with words:

Read the following sentence which I have entitled "The Traveler":

² Nevertheless, whether it is clear that the words constitute a prophecy, or whether the prophetic tone is hidden completely, prophecies are fulfilled, all of them. And whether the world sleeps on, oblivious of God's plan, or responds with eager hearts, the promises of God are sure.

The traveler, weary from a long journey, arrived at a vast plain stretching as far as the eye could see, and stopped to rest before continuing.

As you read these words, you see an image. This is what words are used for much of the time. The prophecies of the Old and New Testaments are full of images. Christ Himself constantly offered images to illustrate His teachings and so did His disciples after Him. But we must realize that the images that words provoke in us actually often come more from our own imagination than from the words themselves. No one but ourselves knows exactly what we "see" because we see with the imagination that is particular to us.

Now, imagine, if you will, that this sentence, which I have called "The Traveler", were a prophecy and that you were awaiting its fulfillment. What would you look for? By what event or sign would you know that it was fulfilled? Well, you would look for the picture you see in your mind, the same thing we do when we await the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Second Coming. We have a "picture" we are waiting for, a vision of what those glorious signs will bring.

Now, let's examine what is happening here. "The Traveler" is 26 words long, but to make a picture from these words, we have to add details - details that simply aren't in those 26 words. Of course, the details we add may indeed be correct, but, then again, they may not.

We have to assume many things, otherwise we can't "see" a picture. There's no harm done in adding details; it's automatic, a natural outcome of the capacity of the human mind. However, what would happen if this "prophecy" were fulfilled in a way that didn't match our picture? What would we do? How would we react? Is it possible that we would miss the fulfillment because of a preconceived notion of how it "should" be fulfilled? Or could we accept that a higher wisdom was operating and could we adjust our thinking. Could we keep our assumptions from getting in the way?

So let's take "look" at "The Traveler". In the picture, what do you see?

Did you assume that the traveler was on foot? What if he arrives on horseback, or by canoe? Did you assume that the traveler was alone? What if he is a soldier in an army? What if he is the commander of an army? Did you assume that the traveler would cross the plain? What if after resting, for

some reason he turns around and returns the way he came? Did you assume that the traveler was to stop for a short while? What if he marries, and raises children before continuing. Did you assume that the traveler was to live? What if he dies as he rests? Did you assume that the plain was empty? What if a city were built there? And did you assume that the traveler was a man? What if the traveler is a woman?

To illustrate how we automatically form a "picture", and how this picture may vary from the one intended, I have, through my "what-ifs" suggested certain details that may have been associated with the fulfillment of this "prophecy". I have not tried to be clever or deceptive in this. The only "rule" I have followed in suggesting these, is that if it were not ruled out by the "prophecy", then it could be part of the "fulfillment".

As we study, in the following chapters actual prophecies and their fulfillment, we will see that God is not even bound by this "rule"; indeed, of course, He is not subject to any "rule" whatsoever, and fulfills prophecies according to His wisdom. Using the life of Christ as an example of the fulfillment of prophecy, we will see that ***even things that seem to be clearly ruled out in a prophecy, may indeed be present in the fulfillment.*** And if this weren't enough to confound anyone who would place their confidence in their own understanding of the scriptures, this may be: ***things that are clearly stated as elements of the fulfillment of a prophecy, may be absent in the actual fulfillment.*** Moreover, the Word of God gives no explanation as to why this is the case. ***It is as if God is telling us that, through the events that have come to pass in the life of Christ, we are to understand the meaning of the prophecies referring to Him.*** For this is exactly what has happened. Now that we have knowledge of Christ and His life through the word of God in the New Testament, we can go back to the Old Testament, and understand His words. Without the New Testament, we cannot understand them.

Now if, as shown in the example of "The Traveler", common words are subject to widely differing interpretation, how could we possibly assume to have grasped the correct interpretation of the holy words we have been given that describe the Advent of the Lord?

The tongue of the prophets described things that others could not perceive. Like a man seeing a coming thunderstorm that his blind friend cannot see, so the prophet sees and tells of things to come.

We, who read their words, or the words of Christ, are not prophets. Yet, generally, we assume we understand the precise meaning of their words. And though to make this assumption is a perfectly natural thing to do, now that we have the life of Christ described in the New Testament before us as the supreme example of how all assumptions were blown to smithereens at His Coming, can we persist in this practice?

The prophecies of the Bible are like seeds, and their fulfillment is like the plants into which these seeds grow. By looking at the seed, there is no way to tell what shape or color or form lies within it. It is only after the seed develops into a plant that we know the "meaning" of the seed.

In the same way, by studying the words of a prophecy, there is no way to tell what it signifies, or what future events will fulfill it. ***It is only after the prophecy has been fulfilled that we can understand what the words of the prophecy mean.***

Implications for the Seeker

So what does all this mean to us? Is this just a new way of looking at prophecies and their interpretation? I believe it means much more than this. For if we consider thoughtfully, we can see that there is implied in the story of the life of Christ something far more important than anything that I have stated so far, in fact, something of infinite significance to the seeker of Christ. It is this: Although God did not reveal to us plainly how we should know who the Messiah was, and although His Coming ran counter to everyone's expectations, ***we were expected to accept and follow Him anyway.***

Chapter 3: If You Had Lived at the Time of Christ

Even among people who are sure of the signs that will accompany the Second Coming, and to whom the prophecies of the Second Coming seem quite clear, ***intuitively they know that the prophecies of the First Coming were not clear.*** We can demonstrate this by asking a simple question:

"If you had lived at the time of Christ, would you have recognized Him?"

A simple question, but hardly an easy one to answer. Although some may, I personally have never heard anyone answer this question "Yes". The response is usually that one would hope to recognize Christ, but one cannot be sure. Intuitively we know that the recognition of Christ was not a simple matter of hearing His message or His words, or of even seeing Him as He moved through the streets of ancient Israel or preached in the temple. For we know that there were many who did indeed have the great blessing of living at His time, and of even meeting Him face to face, but who alas, did not follow Him. Even those who saw or heard of the wondrous acts that Christ performed doubted and even rejected Him.

This question also reveals another aspect of thinking that seems to be prevalent. In answering this question, I've not heard a response that referred to prophecies. Few regard them as tools by which they would have recognized Him. I have never heard anyone say something like "if I had had the prophecies, I would have recognized Him" or "I would have used the prophecies to find Him", or "the prophecies would have helped me". Intuitively we know also, that prophecies would not have been our guide because we can see now, through the record of Christ's life, that in many cases their apparent meaning was not only unclear, but also actually misleading.

However, if you ask someone today, "Will you recognize Christ when He returns?" You can easily get a response to the effect "Recognize? How can

you miss Him!" Although nowhere does it state in the Bible that the New Testament prophecies are easier to understand than those of the Old Testament, it seems that many people assume that this is the case.

Now, if one cannot be sure that they would have recognized Him at His first Coming, ***how can one be sure that they can recognize Him at His Second Coming?*** It seems that, in the same way that the people of His time felt sure about how the Christ should come, the people of this time feel sure about how He will return.

In the Bible, story after story unfolds showing how people - even (and sometimes especially) those who thought they were following the teachings of God - have been so sure of their plans, but how God has had other plans. It is a basic need of human beings to feel secure about the world around us, and to understand what the past means and what the future holds. A sense of security is conducive to a feeling of peace and wellbeing. To insure this, we sometimes form beliefs about things, even to the point where we "know" them - even things that cannot be known. This is why today, regarding the Second Coming, there are millions who are all confidently expecting . . . ***completely different things.***

This question - If you had lived at the time of Christ would you have recognized him? - I do not ask idly, for it has profound implications. For, all those who lived at the time of Christ were, in effect, asked this question - not in so many words, of course, but by their place and time in history. And they didn't have the luxury of answering the question as follows: "One would hope to recognize Him, but one cannot be sure". They had to answer, and they did answer, "yes" or "no". Without knowing that this question was being asked, they answered it by their response to Christ.

They had no sign, no halo, no warning that their whole life - their very existence - would be judged by their response to the moment: to the message that they had heard, and to His Person. Although warned in the scriptures, they had not an inkling as to the true manner Christ would come to them. They had formed their own vision of Christ's Coming, yet God's plan was being carried out according to His own wisdom and His vision surpassed those of mortal man. Those who accepted Christ knew to some extent the role they were playing in God's plan. Those who rejected Him played a role opposite the one they had fondly imagined they would play.

Now, with His Second Coming, what assurance do we have that we will know the role we will play? To be utterly wrong, yet feel utterly righteous, is well within the capability of human beings. The Bible abundantly demonstrates this truth.

Looking back on that time, with the perspective we now have, it is all too easy to understand the things that went wrong at Christ's First Coming - the people's misunderstandings, their blindness and pride. There are certainly things which we, at this time, understand about the plan of God which simply could not have been understood by the people to whom Christ appeared. But this fact should not deceive us into thinking that we fully understand His plan, that God has blessed us with knowing what the future holds. Of course we understand those things that have gone before us and of which we have a record in the scriptures, but so did the people of Christ's time. At any point in time, God has given to His people a sacred record of the past, and promises of the future. The past is understood; the promises of the future are not. Yes, we understand the prophecies referring to Christ's First Coming because their meaning was revealed through His First Coming, but how can we presume to understand those referring to His Second Coming until we witness it?

Seeking the Christ in His Time Without Our Present Knowledge

Consider this: If you had lived at the time of Christ, you no doubt would have been given all the blessings that the people of His time were given. To aid you to recognize the Promised Messiah, you would have been given God's guidance through scripture and prayer, and His assurance that He would always be with those who love Him.

But you would have also been given all the distractions, all the cares and troubles with which God, in His wisdom, endows life on this planet. Your culture would have been the culture into which Christ was born; your thinking, the thinking of His time. Your mind would have been biased by the same erroneous interpretations that were circulated by the religious leaders of His age. With all this, you would have had to seek out the Promised One.

There would have been no one to whom you could have turned for true guidance; no one who could have led you. All those who were regarded with respect, who were noted for their wisdom and faith, and who seemed to understand the scriptures, nevertheless, would have had the wrong "picture"

of the coming Messiah. These same people who completely misunderstood the meaning of the scriptures, however, would have been the very people you would have been brought up to obey and revere.

Furthermore, although the religious leaders of Christ's time were completely wrong in their understanding of the scriptures, still they did not cease to pray for the Messiah to come. They continued to long for the peace, justice, and victory promised them in their sacred scripture. These same people who ignored, rejected, and even persecuted Christ, in their hearts beseeched God to send the Messiah to fulfill the ancient prophecies which their ancestors had longed to see. If you had asked those at the time of Christ, "Will you accept the Messiah when he comes?", no doubt they would have replied, "Accept? We'll lay down our very lives for so Holy a One!"

But how would they have identified the Holy One? Prophecies are words, not pictures. The "picture" comes from the mind of those trying to understand the prophecy, not from the prophecy itself. ***At the time of Christ, there was no infallible authority that could interpret the words or provide the key that would explain their secrets and inner meanings, and thus lead the people to identify the Christ.*** Since there was no infallible authority, the seeker could not rely on his fellow men for guidance.

So who could the seeker have relied on? The only answer that makes sense to me is God, alone. For the seeker at the time of Christ, only an attitude of humble supplication to God and acceptance of His Will could have ensured that he would have recognized Him.

The conditions at the time of Christ were certainly perplexing, and the choices facing seekers of truth formidable. What greater predicament, in fact, could be imagined than the one that faced the people living at the time of Christ. Their choices were bewildering, never simple, and they were fraught with sacrifice. The choices of those who witnessed the birth of Christianity involved ultimately the severing of many ties – ties both of blood and of faith. Choices, however, made in humility and purity of heart held the promise, not only of forging new ties, transcending both blood and faith and all human limitations, but also of leading the seekers themselves to the one everlasting tie with God's Beloved Son.

This story of Christ's Coming into the world, moreover, continues in our time; it did not end in first century Israel. We too have choices to make. Until we recognize Christ at His Return, we, like those who lived at the time of His First Coming, cannot claim to understand the meaning of prophecies about our own time. ***We likewise have no one to whom we can turn for guidance except God. And for us too, only decisions made in humility and purity of heart can lead us to recognize the Christ at His Second Coming.***

Chapter 4: Introduction to the Proofs

Thus far in this book, I have made certain assertions regarding the interpretation and purpose of prophecies, but I have not yet supported these assertions with scriptural evidence. This chapter and the following three will provide that evidence. Following these, we will direct our attention in stages to a subject of greater importance: the implications for the Second Coming.

The principles, which I have introduced, can be summed up as follows: (1) Prophecies must first be fulfilled for their meaning to be understood. (2) One must already believe in Christ to understand the prophecies referring to Him, and therefore (3) Prophecies are not given to lead one to the Christ. (4) The purpose of prophecies is to confirm the faith of those who already believe.

I have numbered these principles here for clarity only, and do not really think of them as having any particular order, or really as being distinct things. The above four statements can just as easily be thought of in this way: ***Prophecies are given to us by a loving God to strengthen our belief in Him. We cannot understand their full meaning until He, Himself, reveals it to us.***

These principles, the truth of which I proceed to demonstrate in these four chapters, have not come to me through years of research or deep thinking, or actually from any effort whatsoever on my part; they were given to me. I was told these principles by my sister, Jeanne.

About thirty years ago, I had a conversation with her, in which, as I recall, she said something like this: "You know, prophecies can only be understood after they have been fulfilled, and only by those who already believe. They are given to confirm the faith of the believer." All that I have written so far has merely been an elaboration of what she stated on that day.

From the instant she expressed her intuition on this subject I have never had any doubt as to its truth; it seemed to fit with everything I knew. And

since that time, everything I have read or seen or heard regarding prophecies has confirmed her intuition.

Since I know that many people will accept these principles in the same manner that I did, simply by having them stated explicitly, and because it is much more interesting to get straight to the point, I did not begin this book with proof. However, because these principles are new to many people and, as mentioned earlier, may seem “backwards”, I here offer the proof that they do indeed hold true under the scrutiny of scripture.

The proof will be presented here in four parts: The remainder of this chapter introduces our investigation of the proofs and briefly introduces some implications for the Second Coming. Chapter five presents a compilation of prophetic references to Christ from the Old Testament. Chapter six looks at the fulfillment of some of these prophetic references, and discusses their significance. Chapter seven concludes the presentation on proof with a look at three situations of special relevance to prophecy that are related in the New Testament.

Chapters five and six are “working” chapters, of sorts, as they ask you to consider intently a number of prophecies. Since for some of you who would rather move past the proofs on to the implications for the Second Coming, spending too much time regarding the proofs might seem to be a digression, I suggest in the introduction of these two chapters, that you may want to read only the beginning of the chapter to get a feel for its content, and then move on, returning later to the material, if you wish.

Which Verses Constitute Prophecies?

Several years ago, I purchased a reference Bible and found the following note in the first few pages:

"A star immediately following a verse in the Old Testament indicates that in the concurrent opinion of many scholars and theologians, the verse embodies a prophetic reference to Christ."

In this particular Bible, almost two hundred verses were thus identified by these stars. Other Bibles, and other references cite more than this. There are arguably many hundreds, some say thousands, of verses in the Old Testament which refer in some way or another to Christ. After all, the Old Testament contains more than twenty three thousand verses, and it may

seem rather doubtful, given the station of Christ, that only a few hundred verses would refer to Him. When we consider the role that God's Son has played and will play in the redemption of mankind, we could assert that the Old Testament in its entirety was written as a prelude to and prediction of the Coming of Christ.

We could, therefore, make a study of the Old Testament as a whole to demonstrate the purpose of prophecy. However, of these thousands of verses, certain ones stand out as having been especially inspired to announce, describe, and praise the Christ. Since these prophecies identified by scholars and theologians include what must be considered the most outstanding references to the Coming Christ, we will choose these as our basis of investigation. Although our compilation of prophetic references will not be exhaustive, it will demonstrate the principles stated above.

Certainly, people may disagree on some of the verses chosen to receive stars - on the one hand considering some verses as not referring to Christ, and on the other, questioning why certain other verses were not included. My purpose, however, is not to justify why these verses are considered prophetic references to Christ. The fact that many scholars and theologians, and, I believe, Christians in general feel that they are prophetic references, is sufficient for me. My purpose is rather to demonstrate that within the generally accepted body of prophecy and the record of its fulfillment, there are implied principles that until now have been overlooked.

A Word About Prophecy

Reading through the Old Testament, and coming upon the verses recognized as references to the future Christ, can be at times quite puzzling. These verses contain some of the most beautiful, poetic, and meaningful descriptions of Christ and His life found in the Bible. ***But a single reading through these verses should convince anyone of the virtual impossibility of understanding from them the manner of Christ's First Coming.*** Although, in retrospect, the accuracy and depth of understanding of the Old Testament references to Christ are truly astonishing, nevertheless, at that time, these verses simply did not present in any way a clear image of how Christ would come. This, I feel, is not a small thing.

Consider: even after 2000 years of research by Christian scholars and theologians - those who have recognized Christ and are therefore in a position to understand properly the meaning of the prophecies referring to Him - these verses, which we recognize as referring to Christ, ***still*** do not present a picture which someone could have followed in order to find Him. Not only do these references present rather universal descriptions of Christ with very little detail, but the references appear both confusing and contradictory in their meaning.

The prophetic verses appear confusing for a variety of reasons. First of all, many of the verses simply do not "look" like prophecies, but simply seem to be stating something, and how would one distinguish one of these statements from the thousands and thousands of other statements found in scripture? Many references speak in the past tense as if referring to events that have already happened with no clue that they were referring to the future. Many of the verses which are clearly references to the future, use such mysterious symbolism that there would be no way to figure out what in the world they mean. And some seem to refer to the writer rather than to someone else.

The prophetic references, moreover, appear to be as contradictory as they are confusing. Thus, Christ is portrayed as both the "*desire of all nations*" (Hag 2:7), whom the people shall praise "*for ever and ever*" (Ps 45:6), and before whom "*all kings shall fall down*" (Ps 72:11), while at the same time He is "*a reproach of men*", and "*despised of the people*" (Ps 22:6). He is both "*leader and commander*" (Isa 55:4), "*ruler in Israel*" (Mic 5:2), and "*The mighty God*" (Isa 9:6), while being "*smitten*", "*afflicted*" (Isa 53:4), and "*spat upon*" (Isa 50:6). He is "*fairer than the children of men*" (Ps 45:2), yet possesses neither "*beauty*" nor "*comeliness*" (Isa 53:2); He is the "*Holy One of Israel*" (Isa 41:14), and a "*worm*" (Ps 22:6).

It is certain that many of the above references, especially the ones referring to Christ's lowliness and suffering, would not have been considered references to the Messiah at all until after Christ's Coming. Of course, now the references to Christ can be reconciled and understood in the light of the New Testament. The fact that He is the "*desire of all nations*" does not, in our minds, preclude the fact that he was also "*despised of the people*". ***But, before the coming of Christ, this could simply not be imagined.*** For those living before Christ, there would be no way of understanding how the different references to the Messiah that we now recognize - references to

both His transcendent glory and dominion, and also to His humiliation and suffering - could be reconciled. Therefore only references to the Christ that seemed to harmonize with others would be kept in the body of prophecy. And with clear references to the greatness of their coming Messiah and Savior, and no clear references otherwise, any verse which seemed to run counter to that image, would no doubt have been understood as referring to someone else. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that all accounts in the New Testament seem to indicate that in the thinking of the time, the Messiah was to triumph, both spiritually and physically. A suffering Messiah, despite the fact that there were many references that He would suffer, was not imagined. God had warned of His suffering, but no one understood.

Having the Benefit of Living After Christ

Having the benefit of living after Christ and believing in Him, we can now go back and see what verses refer to Him. Now we can see that Christ's suffering and crucifixion were destined to be, and that His great sacrifice was the symbol of His glory. But before Christ, the scripture contained no stars, and the people were "on their own".

Prophetic references from the Old Testament clearly demonstrate that God has revealed many prophecies which not only cannot be understood until after fulfillment, but which ***cannot even be recognized as being prophecies until after they have been fulfilled.***

This is no small thing, for it then follows, that there may be verses in the Bible which refer to Christ's Second Coming, which have not yet been recognized as prophecies. And, as in the case of His First Coming, is it not possible, that these prophecies describe aspects of His Coming that are as yet unsuspected? And again, as in the case of His First Coming, could not the verses which have been recognized as prophecies give a picture to people that they might cling to so stubbornly that it would prove a barrier to their recognizing Christ at His Second Coming?

In other words, the same mistakes that were made in failing to recognize Christ at His First Coming may easily be made at His Second Coming. Indeed, unless we learn from the errors in judgment, the presumption, and claims to omniscience that prevented people from recognizing Jesus as the Christ, won't we surely fail to recognize Him at His Second Coming, and for similar reasons?

In order to prevent the consequences of such a terrible misjudgment, we should reflect, deeply reflect, on that which separated those who believed, from those who did not believe, that Jesus was the Christ.

Remember, people in the first century had no stars in their scriptures to designate the prophetic references, nor any sure guide by which to interpret them. Why did some believe and others reject the Christ? This we will need to understand and ponder.

What Was the Determining Factor?

From the evidence in the New Testament, what do we find was the determining factor that separated those who believed, from those who didn't? Was it knowledge of the prophecies? Did those who had knowledge of the prophecies accept Him, and those who didn't have knowledge reject Him? No. Was it knowledge of the sacred scripture as a whole? Did the religious doctors of His age accept him, while the unlearned rejected Him? No. Was it adhering to the laws of the Old Testament? Did those who observed strictly their sacred laws follow Him, while others rejected Him? No. Was it seeing Him? Was it hearing His words? Was it witnessing Him perform miracles? No.

The determining factor was this: Those who manifested humility and purity of heart, accepted Him; those who didn't, rejected Him. At the time of Christ, knowledge of the prophecies was beside the point, so to speak. Salvation was gained through humble acceptance of the will of God as manifested through the words and actions of Christ, and not through knowledge of the prophecies.

Through Christ's coming, the people were tested. The humble and pure in heart were separated from the proud and hypocritical even as the "[wheat](#)" is separated from the "[tares](#)" (Mat 13:3). People were not separated according to their knowledge, their religious practices, their rank in life, or the particular circumstances in which they happened to be. ***They were separated according to the condition of their hearts.***

If God had wanted us to know how the Christ would come in order that we could have easily recognized Him, He could have given us, in simple language, the year, the place, His name, a description of His life with all the details that would distinguish Him from others, and then stated that this prophecy was to be taken literally.

Obviously, it was not ours to know these things.

Chapter 5: Some Prophetic References to Christ

This chapter is simply a compilation of some of the prophetic references to Christ found in the Old Testament. In the interest of brevity, I have not set the prophecies in their scriptural context, nor have I explained what the context is. Neither have I given notes or cross references to these verses. Some of the related references we will investigate in the following chapters and comment on their implications, and of course, you are encouraged to further investigate these and other aspects of these verses on your own. But our investigation will begin with reading these verses as they appear in the Old Testament. Therefore, they are presented without cross references to verses of the New Testament, without footnotes, without commentary.

The approach to our investigation will be straightforward. I ask you simply to put yourself in the position of someone living at the time of Christ. All that is required is to read and think about these prophetic references. Each reference to Christ illustrates some aspects of God's purpose in revealing prophecy that, if we spend time considering it, may become clear to us. Of course, we all have different insights, and you may disagree with some of the things I put forward in this book. This is the fruit of the human intellect. On the whole, however, I have confidence that the evidence given in the Bible is so overwhelmingly in favor of the need for a new way to look at prophecy, and that fulfillment and acceptance are required to understanding prophecy, that our disagreements will give way to our consensus.

In many cases our experience with these precious words has been within the context of the great meaning of their fulfillment. Thus, for many of them, we have seen them only surrounded with the correct details with which they would eventually be associated. By this historic association, these details have crept into our understanding of the prophecies themselves and have become an integral part of them, and rightly so. But stripped of these future details, they reveal quite a different picture - a much more mysterious, subtle, and in some cases, deceptive picture, than the one with

which we are familiar. It is for this reason, to allow us to see through the eyes of the seeker at the time of Christ, that they have been compiled without commentary.

I realize that the many prophecies presented below may prove uninteresting or even difficult when they are read at one sitting. If you prefer not to read them through at this time, I suggest that you at least read some of them to get a sense of what is being presented in this chapter. Feel free, however, if you desire, to skip directly to the following chapter, where further study of the nature and purpose of prophecy will be undertaken through the direct examination of some specific prophecies and their fulfillment. The prophecies compiled here can then be visited later if you wish.

The reader needs to remember that the prophecies listed here do not present a coherent whole which is easily understood. Many of the prophecies require considerable concentration to understand, even by those who have already recognized Christ, and this fact underscores the utter impossibility - without the benefit of the New Testament - of someone's trying to predict from prophecies the manner of Christ's Coming.

If a thorough "study" of the prophecies, therefore, does not appeal to you at this time because of the effort and difficulty it involves, let me at least urge you, on some occasion, to simply read the prophecies with an open heart to experience their naked glory, the beauty of their depiction of Christ, the depth of their knowledge, and their exalted vision of the future.

Genesis

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:15

God shall enlarge Japeth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

Genesis 9:27

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

The Second Coming

Genesis 12:3

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

Genesis 17:19

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

Genesis 18:18

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Genesis 21:12

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Genesis 22:18

And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed

Genesis 26:4

And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Genesis 28:4

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 28:14

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

Genesis 49:10

Numbers

I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

Numbers 24:17

Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

Numbers 24:19

Deuteronomy

The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

Deuteronomy 18:15

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19

1 Samuel

The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the Earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

1 Samuel 2:10

And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

1 Samuel 2:35

2 Samuel

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

2 Samuel 7:12-13

And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

2 Samuel 7:16

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

2 Samuel 23:3-4

1 Chronicles

He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

1 Chronicles 17:12

But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

1 Chronicles 17:14

Job

For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

The Second Coming

Job 19:25

If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness:

Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.

Job 33:23-24

Psalms

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Psalms 2

The Second Coming

I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Psalm 16:8-10

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Psalm 22:1

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

Psalm 22:6-8

They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and roaring lion.

Psalm 22:13

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Psalm 22:16-18

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Psalm 22:22

The Second Coming

They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

Psalm 22:31

He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

Psalm 34:20

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears has thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Psalm 40:6-8

Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

Psalm 45:2

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows

Psalm 45:6-7

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

Psalm 45:17

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Psalm 68:18

For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

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Psalm 69:9

They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Psalm 69:21

Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.

There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Psalm 72:1-17

I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:

Psalm 78:2

Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

Psalm 89:4

Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

Psalm 89:19

Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

Psalm 89:27

His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

Psalm 89:29

His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.

It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

Psalm 89:36-37

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.

They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

Psalm 102:25-27

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many counties.

He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

Psalm 110

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

Psalm 118:22

Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.

Psalm 118:26

Isaiah

And it shall come to pass in last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 2:2-4

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Isaiah 6:9

And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 8:14

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Isaiah 9:2

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it,

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and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah 9:6-7

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Isaiah 11:1-5

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Isaiah 11:10

And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

Isaiah 22:22

Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Isaiah 28:16

Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

Isaiah 35:6

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Isaiah 40:3

Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Isaiah 40:10-11

Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small and shalt make the hills as chaff.

Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel

Isaiah 41:15-16

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

The Second Coming

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

Isaiah 42:1-4

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

To open the blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Isaiah 42:6-7

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

Isaiah 45:21

Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy one of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Isaiah 49:7-10

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Isaiah 50:6

See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

Just as there were many who were appalled at him-his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness

So will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

Isaiah 52:13-15 (NIV)

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53

Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Isaiah 55:4-5

And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

Isaiah 59:16

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.

Isaiah 59:20

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Isaiah 60:3

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

Isaiah 61:1-3

Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

Isaiah 62:11

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

Isaiah 63:1

I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

Isaiah 63:3

For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.

In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

Isaiah 63:8-9

Jeremiah

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Jeremiah 30:9

Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

Jeremiah 31:15

In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land

In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.

Jeremiah 33:15-16

Ezekiel

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.

Ezekiel 34:23-24

And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.

Ezekiel 37:24-25

Daniel

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter;: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Daniel 2:44-45

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:14

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

Daniel 9:24-26

Hosea

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.

Hosea 3:5

When Israel was a child then I loved him and called my son out of Egypt.

Hosea 11:1

Micah

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2

Haggai

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2:7

Zechariah

Here now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.

Zechariah 3:8

And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord:

Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest

upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

Zechariah 6:12-13

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

Zechariah 9:9-10

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

Zechariah 11:12-13

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

Zechariah 12:10

And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

Zechariah 13:6-7

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

Zechariah 14:4

Malachi

Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:1

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Malachi 4:5

Chapter 6: Commentary on Fulfillment of Prophetic References to Christ

That the compilation of prophetic references to Christ presented in the previous chapter defies accurate interpretation, even meaningful interpretation, without the benefit of the New Testament, is, I think, apparent, and by itself constitutes proof of sorts, that prophecies are not given to lead one to the Christ.

However, there is additional proof available to us: their fulfillment. Having looked at these references by themselves, we will now take our investigation one step further by looking at their fulfillment, and the light that it throws on the purpose of prophecy.

It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss the fulfillment of all of the prophecies presented in the previous chapter. Rather, to achieve the purpose of demonstrating the nature of prophecy, while at the same time attempting to be brief, I have chosen to present all of the references cited in the first book of the New Testament - the nineteen occurrences in the Book of Matthew where it is specifically stated that a prophecy has been fulfilled. Although only a partial set of prophecies, yet because it encompasses those of an apostle's description of the life of Christ, there is a kind of completeness to the list that Matthew presents. Of course, these nineteen occurrences are not the only references that find fulfillment in the life of Christ as described by Matthew. A reference Bible will cite hundreds of verses in the Old Testament. These nineteen are only the ones specifically mentioned by Matthew as having been fulfilled.

The same principles which these occurrences will uncover can be seen throughout the rest of the New Testament. I do not believe that the actual spiritual principles, which influenced the peoples of Christ's time, are hidden beneath layers of information that can only be uncovered by scholarly research. If this were the case, how could God's Word be available to the common man? Does one need to be a scholar to understand why the Beloved Christ was rejected, or that He laid down His life for the salvation of

the world, or what Christ desires for those who follow him? Does one need years of study to understand the pride of the Pharisees, or the humility of the disciples? No. So, why would another fundamental message of the Bible, one that implies that God, alone, knows the meaning of prophecy before its fulfillment, require anything more than to read the Bible with the sincere intention of understanding?

The prophecies presented here will be generally in this form: I have numbered the prophecies as they appear in the order Matthew has presented them. For each of these, after having given the Old Testament reference, under the heading "Predictions", I explore briefly what these words could have meant to someone seeking the Christ at His First Coming. ***That is, we will attempt to look at the words through the eyes of the seeker.*** After this, the verses from the book of Matthew, indicating fulfillment of these words, are given. Finally I conclude with commentary on the possible significance of the whole process.

As with the previous chapter, you may not want to read the presentation of all nineteen prophecies at this time. By reading the first few of these, you will get a feel for the relationship between prophecy and fulfillment. The rest can be revisited at a later time if you choose.

I think you will agree, that it is evident from the very first prophecy examined, how difficult a task it would have been to recognize the Christ through scripture.

1. The Virgin Birth and Immanuel

Verse from Old Testament

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel³.

Isaiah 7:14

Predictions

This verse clearly states that "*the Lord himself*" will give a sign: A virgin will bear a son and will call Him "*Immanuel*". The fact that "*the Lord himself*" would be the one giving the sign would certainly seem to indicate that there

³ NIV: and will call him Immanuel

would be no doubt as to its impact. For, of anyone who could give a sign, certainly the Maker of the heavens has power to make great signs. Who but the Lord could cause such a thing to happen?

For a virgin to have a child is certainly miraculous, and one acquainted with this verse might think that when the birth occurred - whenever that might be (for there was no time given) - it would be the cause of wonder and excitement in the community, possibly in all of Israel. Such a strange and wonderful thing would surely cause people to contemplate God and His power.

And this child would have its life, in large part no doubt, determined by this birth - growing up as the child born of a virgin - the child from God, the divine child. We can imagine what his childhood would bring, how he would be loved by all, and would become the hope of His people. And what a joy for the mother to bear such a child.

Isaiah's words also clearly state that this child would be called "*Immanuel*".

From this verse, it seems clear, at sometime in the future, that a child called Immanuel would be born of a virgin. It also seems, when this miraculous event was to occur, that the people would immediately recall these words of Isaiah. The words would not be forgotten, for not only was his birth to be miraculous, but the name of the child embodied a wonderful promise: for "Immanuel" means "God with us".

Fulfillment

Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example⁴, was minded to put her away privily⁵.

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of

4 NIV: public disgrace

5 NIV: divorce her quietly

David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying,

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel⁶, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Matthew 1:18-23

Commentary

Right away we see that this prophecy was not fulfilled in a way that could be predicted.

The scriptures promised that "*a virgin shall conceive*" and this is what happened, but the New Testament's reference to Joseph not being willing to disgrace her publicly seems to indicate that there was no great sign associated with this miraculous conception, no way for people to know that it was happening, or that it had occurred. The Bible doesn't indicate that the news of the virgin birth was spread to anyone. A crier did not go out through the city, and give the glad tidings of the virgin birth. No. The New Testament clearly indicates that the initial reaction to Mary's becoming pregnant would be the assumption that she certainly was not a virgin. Her own husband needed the reassurance of an angel that she had conceived of the Holy Ghost. In fact, there is no mention that anyone in the community at large was ever told of, or believed in the virgin birth, except Mary's cousin, Elisabeth. After the description of Christ's birth in the Gospels, that is the last we hear of the virgin birth. Not only do we find that knowledge of the virgin birth had not reached the ears of the people, there are clear references that during Christ's ministry, the people assumed that He was the son of Joseph.

Did Isaiah mention anywhere that although it would be a sign from "*the Lord himself*" generally, the virgin birth would be unknown to the people? That during the child's life, he would not have been known as the child of the

⁶ NIV: call him Emmanuel

virgin birth? Did he say that this virgin would have a husband? Could this situation have been inferred from Isaiah's prophecy? Did Isaiah say anywhere that even the man who would take this virgin as his wife, would want to divorce her because of the child? Did he give any hint as to the details that would surround the virgin birth? No. Isaiah simply referred to her conception as a sign from "*the Lord himself*"

And what about being called Immanuel? There is no mention in the New Testament of anyone referring to Christ as Emmanuel. No mention of anyone even using the word "*Emmanuel*". Is there any indication in the words of Isaiah that we should look to any name but "*Immanuel*" for the fulfillment of his prophecy? Any indication that Isaiah's words have a purely symbolic, rather than a literal meaning? Did Isaiah anywhere say "his name might not be Immanuel, and no one during His time will call Him by that name"? Did he give any clue that He may be called by another name? That a new interpretation in the future would have Him called by a name that means not "*God with us*", but "Saviour"?

Isaiah mentions nothing about other names; he mentions only what he was to be called. What recourse would anyone have had but to assume that this would be the name given this child, or at least that He would have been called this, if given another name? Could we have predicted by Isaiah's words that Christ's name would be Jesus and that no one would call Him "*Emmanuel*"? No.

Isaiah's words are silent regarding many things. He didn't explain the circumstances surrounding the fulfillment of this prophecy. He didn't even hint at them. He simply stated the truth.

As we will see with the other prophecies pointing to Christ's appearance, there is no way that this prophecy could have been understood before its fulfillment. If we had clung to the thinking that the sign from "*the Lord himself*" was to be great, that news of the virgin birth was to be heard, or that someone named or called "*Immanuel*" was to appear, we would have missed the Christ.

Reflect how disastrous holding stubbornly to particular interpretations and clinging to assumed details, or even a mere name can be.

Yet, for those who believe, how beautiful and timeless are the words of Isaiah. Cherished by multitudes as the great and holy promise of the Lord,

these simple words became clothed with majesty through their fulfillment. Though not fulfilled as one could have foreseen, to those who believed, it mattered not, for the words were true.

2. Ruler From Bethlehem

Verse from Old Testament

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth⁷ have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2

Predictions

Well, it seems that Micah has given the precise place where he "*that is to be ruler in Israel*" is to come from. From this verse, the seeker would no doubt understand that a ruler - a great ruler, for he is described as one "*whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*" - would come from Bethlehem. It is not stated whether this will be the birth place or the dwelling place of this great one. It also is not explained what is meant by the term "*shall he come forth unto me*".

As with all prophecies of the Bible, the prophet - in this case Micah - says nothing to indicate that some of his words should be taken literally, and others symbolically. One acquainted with this verse would look for that "*ruler in Israel*" who would come from "*Bethlehem*".

Fulfillment

And When he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

⁷ NIV: origins

Commentary

Once again we see that the seeker would have great difficulty being led to Christ through this prophecy. The name Bethlehem was to be taken literally in Micah's prophecy, but "*ruler in Israel*" was to be taken symbolically. How was the seeker to know? Is the seeker to assume a meaning and then judge the Promised One by his assumptions? Is the seeker to guess the meaning, when what is at stake is the salvation of His soul?

Did Micah explain that by "*ruler*" was meant a purely heavenly ruler or that He would rule the souls of men? Did he indicate that he would have divine authority rather than earthly sovereignty?

No. Micah is silent as to the meaning of his prophecy, and it was left up to time and the coming of Jesus to reveal what his words meant. There was no way for anyone to know with certainty the meaning of Micah's words before they were fulfilled.

This great prophecy, predicting the Sovereignty of the Savior, and His place of birth, was revealed in heavenly words, not earthly. Its meaning is correctly understood only in the light of the words revealed by the One who fulfilled it; He Whose kingdom was not of this world.

3. Out of Egypt

Verse from Old Testament

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

Hosea 11:1

Predictions

Predictions? This prophecy speaks in the past tense - "*was*", "*called*", "*loved*". How could anyone know that this was even a prophecy? How could we assume that this was speaking about the future?

As far as I can see, there is no help for the seeker, here, before fulfillment.

Fulfillment

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

When He arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Matthew 2:13-15

Commentary

Once again, in this prophecy, we see that in the same sentence, the word of God as revealed through Hosea, goes from speaking symbolically: referring to Israel as a child, to using literal language: referring to His Son coming out of Egypt. However, the words of the Old Testament, give no clue to the reader that would have helped him know which parts to take symbolically, and which literally.

This clearly shows that prophetic language follows no rules of past, present, or future tense. The word of God, while seemingly referring to the past, can be referring to a future time. What clearer demonstration could there be of the difficulty in understanding prophetic language before fulfillment? These words would, no doubt, have been overlooked by someone looking forward to the future Christ.

After their fulfillment, however, these words of Hosea stand out above his other words as a jewel that God had set in the scriptures, awaiting the time for their beauty to be revealed. With the coming of Christ, the hidden meaning of these words were revealed. From the actual fulfillment of this prophecy, we get a picture of the omnipotent, benevolent Father watching over His Son. We can see from these words that at no time was Christ in danger, for His Father had known, even from the beginning of time, that there would be those who would seek to take His life, and He had made a plan for His protection.

In these simple words of Hosea, great meaning is contained. But who could have known?

4. Lamentation and Bitter Weeping

Verse from Old Testament

Thus saith the Lord; a voice was⁸ heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

Jeremiah 31:15

Predictions

As with some other prophecies, in considering what one may have been able to predict from Jeremiah's words, the first question we have to ask is "How could someone have known that this verse could have been used to see into the future?"

However, for those who may have thought that these words referred to the future (outwardly they speak in the past) it seems to refer to the suffering of a mother - specifically Rachel - for her children, who may have perished following some kind of tragedy.

Fulfillment

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Matthew 2:16-18

⁸ NIV gives present tense for this verse, not past tense

Commentary

This prophecy refers not to Christ Himself, but rather to circumstances associated with His Coming. For Matthew it is a divine testimony to events in the life of his Lord.

The mysterious nature of prophecy is again demonstrated in this verse from Jeremiah. One wonders whether Jeremiah himself knew the significance of the words he had written, or whether it was left to Matthew to unfold their meaning. Whatever the case, the heart is moved at his description of the suffering which the slaying of the children of Bethlehem and the surrounding area must have caused.

Although both meaningful, and highly significant, this could not have led one to the Christ.

5. Nazarene

The next occurrence of mention of fulfillment of scripture in the Book of Matthew presents us with an interesting question. The verse from Matthew is the following:

And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Matthew 2:23

The question is "What prophet, and what prophecy is Matthew referring to?" The word "*Nazarene*" is not mentioned in the Old Testament, neither is the city of Nazareth.

In any case, not knowing the prophecy that this verse refers to, we cannot discuss how it may have been interpreted by the seeker.

6. Prepare Ye The Way of the Lord

Verse from Old Testament

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God⁹.

Isaiah 40:3

Predictions

This seems to be an exhortation from "*him that crieth*". And the exhortation seems to encompass two things: prepare "*the way of the Lord*", and "*make straight in the desert a highway for our God*".

Since this verse gives no details regarding how to effect the exhortations given, or who was exhorting us, we would have as many different pictures of "*him*", "*wilderness*", and "*Highway in the desert*" as we would people interpreting it.

Fulfillment

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Matthew 3:1-3

Commentary

The symbolism of these mystical words of Isaiah could only have been understood through recognition of Christ. This prophecy refers to both John the Baptist and Christ: John the Baptist is "*him that crieth in the wilderness*" calling people to prepare for the Coming of Christ.

In these words of Isaiah, both Christ and John the Baptist are exalted. That John the Baptist is referred to in the Old Testament, is an indication of his greatness. Christ Himself also refers to the greatness of John.

⁹ NIV: A voice of one calling: In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our god.

As much as Jesus and John are exalted, however, there was little or no help to the seeker in these words. Isaiah's words are far too mystical to have been decoded before fulfillment.

7. A Great Light

Verse from Old Testament

The people that walked¹⁰ in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Isaiah 9:2

Predictions

Again, Isaiah's words seem to refer to an event in the past: the shining of a great light. Therefore, as with many other verses from the Old Testament, it is hard to imagine that someone would have regarded this verse as foretelling a future event or circumstance.

As with all prophecies, a seeker might have assumed that the "*light*" spoken of above, may have been either a physical light, or a symbol of God's blessings, and Isaiah's words do not explain whether a literal or symbolic meaning (or both) was intended.

It would certainly seem that at the time the light shined, the people would be astonished, maybe even overjoyed. They were a people who walked in darkness, who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death. Whether literal or figurative, the light would surely be a welcome change from the darkness.

Fulfillment

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed in Galilee;

And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

¹⁰ NIV: The people walking

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

Matthew 4:12-16

Commentary

We see from the fulfillment of this prophecy, the great meaning intended by Isaiah. Christ was the Light of the world, and the people to whom He appeared were living in darkness.

That the "*light*", which was intended by Isaiah, was to be the Messiah is something that could hardly have been guessed. Seeing Jesus of Nazareth as that light required recognition of Him as the Son of God.

8. He Hath Borne Our Griefs

Verse from Old Testament

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Isaiah 53:4

Predictions

This verse appears to be simply a statement, not a prophecy. This would clearly seem to refer to someone who had suffered, but gives no details as to his suffering. It also seems to refer to either rejection by the people or simply disregard or ungratefulness for one who had suffered for their sakes.

It seems to imply that the station or qualities of the person spoken of had not been recognized or appreciated. The words "*yet we did esteem him . . .*" seem to indicate some sort of error in judgement on the part of the observer.

Fulfillment

When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

Matthew 8:16-17

Commentary

Although it remained hidden until after the coming of Christ, Isaiah here foretells both the suffering of Christ and His healing ministry - both recognized now as signs of His glory.

Speaking in the past tense, once again, it offered no help in predicting how the Christ would come. It could not have been recognized as a prophecy pointing to the Messiah, nor could it have led one to recognize Him.

9. The Lord, Whom Ye Seek

Verse from Old Testament

Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:1

Predictions

This verse clearly seems to be a prophecy. What is not clear, however, is what it means. Malachi's words refer to "*I*" (later referred to as "*the Lord of hosts*"), "*my messenger*", "*the Lord whom ye seek*" who "*shall suddenly come to his temple*", "*the messenger of the covenant*".

Anyone considering this verse would no doubt get a sense of some momentous happening to be looked forward to.

Fulfillment

And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

Matthew 11:7-10

Commentary

This prophecy, just as the one presented earlier from Isaiah (40:3), refers to both John the Baptist and Christ. We get a sense from these prophecies of the oneness of their ministries and the love they bore for each other. It is Christ, Himself, who quoted this prophecy of Malachi.

The symbolism of these words, however, is far too mysterious for anyone but God, and perhaps a prophet to have understood before fulfillment. The passage itself from Matthew indicates that no one, in fact, did understand the Old Testament saying until Christ Himself revealed its meaning.

10. He Shall Bring Forth Judgment to the Gentiles

Verses from Old Testament

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles¹¹.

He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax¹² shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

¹¹ NIV: nations

¹² NIV: wick

He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law¹³.

Isaiah 42:1-4

Predictions

Any reader of these words would have to be struck by Isaiah's reference to the "*servant*" who would not only "*bring forth judgment to the Gentiles*" but who would "*set judgment in the earth*". The "*servant*"'s greatness is also shown by references to His holding "*truth*", and the "*law*", and having divine determination. And that this great One is the servant of the speaker, would seem to indicate that the speaker would have to be none other than God Himself.

While some of these verses present the greatness and authority of the "*servant*", the remaining verses speak of other qualities. The images they give are not easily understood, and would no doubt have led to many different interpretations. They may either have been taken by the seeker at their literal meaning, or as symbols of the personality or doings of the servant. I do not feel it is necessary to go into possible interpretations of these images. However, to me it seems clear that to anyone trying to understand them, they would be puzzling, to say the least.

Fulfillment

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;

And charged them that they should not make him known:

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles

¹³ NIV: In his law the islands will put their hope

He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory

And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

Matthew 12:14-22

Commentary

Though a prophecy, it is clear that it was not intended to lead one to Christ. It offers no clues that the seeker might have used to find the Christ in his search. There are some details given in the prophecy; some of which have literal, and some symbolic meanings. Understanding the meaning of this prophecy would have been an insurmountable task before its fulfillment. Even after fulfillment, the meaning is subject to varying interpretation.

Intuitively, from our knowledge of the Savior given us in the New Testament, we understand the meaning of the first verse of Isaiah's prophecy. From the second verse on, however, our intuition fails us.

What does it mean by "*He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.*"? And what about the "*reed*" and the "*flax*"? The word "*reed*" is used with various meanings in the New Testament: sometimes literal, sometimes symbolic. There is no use in the New Testament of the word "*flax*", besides the above mention in Matthew. And which "*isles*" and which "*law*" are meant?

Of course, it is possible that there are several different interpretations to each verse in this prophecy, each of which are correct. But certainly, it is only after fulfillment that they could have been understood.

11. Understand Not

Verse from Old Testament

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Isaiah 6:9

Predictions

None, as far as I can see. This just appears to be a statement.

Fulfillment

He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaías, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

Matthew 13:11-14

Commentary

This prophecy refers not to Christ directly, but to "*them*", the people of Christ's time. It is a reference to their having attained the presence of the Holy One, having heard His words and witnessed His person, yet not having realized the significance of the privilege they were given, or having benefited from it.

Once again, I see no help here for the seeker.

12. I Will Open My Mouth in A Parable

Verse from Old Testament

I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings¹⁴ of old:

Psalms 78:2

Predictions

¹⁴ NIV: I will utter hidden things

The speaker of these words seems to be saying that he will speak in parables and reveal hidden things of old.

What a seeker reading this verse might predict is that, God willing, the author of these words would at some time proceed to fulfill his promise and speak in parables of hidden things of old.

Besides this, I cannot see or understand anything more from this verse.

Fulfillment

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Matthew 13:34-35

Commentary

Matthew here explains that this verse from the Psalms was not merely meant as the voice of the writer, but referred to the Messiah Himself.

Who could have known?

13. With Their Lips

Verses from Old Testament

(note: although only the first of the following verses is referred to in the New Testament, the one following it is included for the sake of completeness)

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

Predictions

These words of Isaiah speak in general about three things. The first verse seems to be a condemnation of the people by the Lord God. This is followed by the Lord's promise that he will perform marvelous things. There is then a reference to the utter feebleness of the wisdom and understanding of men.

One pondering these verses may have expected marvelous things to be performed by the Lord. And why would the Lord perform these things? Well it seems that they would be performed in response to the low state of the people. Would the wondrous work be to awaken them? To guide them? To bless them? To punish them? Isaiah doesn't say. But surely, the people would be astonished.

Or would they?

Regarding where or when or of what nature the things were to be, Isaiah, once again is silent. However, the first verse's reference to "*this people*" may have led one to believe that the people of Isaiah's time would witness what the Lord would perform.

Fulfillment

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you saying,

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

Matthew 15:3-8

Commentary

Isaiah recorded the words which the Lord spoke through him "*Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth*". Seven hundred years later someone claims that the words refer to himself. Who could have predicted this? Isaiah's words say nothing of the Messiah. Who could have guessed that this would be the case?

Yes, it is abundantly clear from the New testament that Christ certainly did marvelous things. It is also abundantly clear, however, from the story of Christ, that He regarded those who "*seeketh after a sign*" as "*evil and adulterous*" (Mat 16:4).

So, was the prophecy meant for one to find Christ by looking for a "*wondrous work*"?, or seeking after a sign? Or was it meant that one could find the Christ by looking for someone whom the people would draw unto with their lips, but from whom their hearts were far? Wouldn't a myriad of government and religious leaders have fulfilled this criteria?

Isaiah's words were simply not meant to help in the recognition of the Christ. We can now understand the meaning of his words only because Christ Himself has revealed them to us. Before fulfillment, Isaiah's words would have provided no help for the seeker.

14. Thy King Cometh Unto Thee

Verse from Old Testament

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Zechariah 9:9

Predictions

This verse seems to describe a joyous happening for Israel, and Jerusalem in particular: the arrival of their King. The King described in this verse possesses several wonderful qualities: he is just, holy - "*having salvation*", and humble. Possessing these qualities would surely be the cause

of His being loved by the people, which would be the source of the great rejoicing referred to by Zechariah.

The verse gives what seems to be a straight forward prediction of a future event, one that anyone would seem eager to attend.

Fulfillment

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them and straightway he will send them.

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

Matthew 21:1-5

Commentary

Once again, we can see that the tongue of the prophet moves from symbolic to literal language in the same sentence, as if it matters not what style is used, and giving no hint that he is doing this. Might not the significance of the prophet's speaking in this way be that it really doesn't matter whether the words are to be taken literally or symbolically? That prophecy is not intended as a signpost pointing the way to the Christ? That it is enough simply to glorify Christ, to tell of His wonderful qualities, or events in His life?

The prophet was simply speaking the holy words that were revealed to him. Eventually the meaning of these words would become clear to those who believed in Christ. Isn't this all that really matters?

Speaking of the use of literal and symbolic language, we can see now that both His Kingship and riding upon a donkey can have both literal or both symbolic meanings. In a sense Christ was, and is, King in a symbolic way. In

another sense, he is King in a more real and literal sense than any king whose kingdom was ever of this earth. At the same time, it can be said that His riding upon a donkey was a symbol of His meekness before men, a meekness, which despite His great power, no man can ever hope to attain. At the same time, the manner of His entrance into Jerusalem fulfilled in a literal sense the words spoken by Zechariah, some five hundred years previous.

15. Son of Man Goeth

The next mention in the book of Matthew of the fulfillment of prophecy is this:

And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

Matthew 26:21-24

Here, Christ confirms the fact that the manner of His departing from this world is foretold in the Old Testament. He does not, however, cite specific verses or the name of the prophet to whom He is referring. It is left, therefore, to the believer in Christ to discover what verses are "*written*" of Him.

There is a wide range of verses that Christ may have intended when He spoke these words. We cannot know for sure exactly which He meant, since He did not tell us. Many verses of Psalm 22 are regarded by scholars as relevant to Christ's words here, as is the entire chapter five of the Book of Isaiah. Also, Daniel, verse 9:26 is often cited. Furthermore, there are many other verses which scholars cite in this connection.

Since there are so many verses regarded as applicable to Christ's words above, I will not comment on them individually. They contain many symbolic

and some literal references to Christ, all of whose meanings are, of course, very great. For the most part, the Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 speak about Christ's suffering and humiliation. Daniel gives the prophecy, well known for its astounding accuracy, of the time that the Messiah will be "*cut off*" (Dan 9:26) – 490 years after the command to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem.

As with all other prophecies, it seems clear to me, that these verses could only have been rightly understood after fulfillment.

16. Smite The Shepherd

Verse from Old Testament

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon¹⁵ the little ones.

Zechariah 13:7

Predictions

This verse seems to foretell punishment and/or death, at the will of the Lord of hosts. The objects of this justice will be the "*shepherd*", also referred to as "*the man that is my fellow*", and "*the little ones*". No explanation is given regarding why these people should deserve this treatment, nor what the purpose of the scattering of the sheep should be.

One who pondered this verse would wonder who are the shepherd and the little ones, and why they would receive this action from the hand of God.

Fulfillment

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

Matthew 26:30-31

¹⁵ NIV: against

Commentary

Before the coming of Christ, one could hardly have imagined that the shepherd would be the Messiah Himself. In fact, it seems that the premise that this verse referred to the coming Messiah and His followers would have been most strenuously objected to, or at the least, ridiculed. For, was the Messiah to herd sheep? Was He to be punished by God?

These divine words of Zechariah held a meaning that only the Christ Himself was to know and reveal. They were revealed to none before His Coming, and after His Coming they hold meaning for only those who believe in Him.

17. Scriptures Fulfilled

The next mention in the book of Matthew of the fulfillment of prophecy is this:

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

But all this was done that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him and fled.

Matthew 26:52-56

Here, again, Christ Himself confirms that the events associated with His ministry have been foretold in the sacred scriptures. He also indicates that having been foretold by the word of God, these events are irrevocable, and not subject to the will of man. Thus He assured His followers that no matter what was to happen, and whether or not they understood the significance of the coming events or not, they should have faith that the Father was the mover of events in this world.

Christ's words here seem to be an extension and reiteration of His earlier statement in Matthew 26:24, that the prophets of old have testified of Him. Once again Christ gives no specific reference to help us discern to which verses of the Old Testament He is referring. As with Matthew 26:21-24 commented above, given the many verses that Christ may have intended, commentary on them would be lengthy, and I do not feel this is necessary. And once again, the reader is referred to chapter five or, of course, the Old Testament, to determine the meaning of the Lord's words given here.

Although these occurrences in Matthew of the fulfillment of prophecy offer no specific references to those prophecies for us to consider, they do offer us something of considerable significance: By not focusing on particular words of the Old Testament, while at the same time indicating that events were unfolding according to the plan of God revealed to His chosen people, Christ has opened the door for His believers to search the scriptures for all that was written of Him. By this statement, we are freed from a narrow view that only verses specifically referred to by Christ or His disciples are prophecies.

The search for these prophetic references to Christ, which has continued up to this day, has been undertaken in the following manner: Using the words Christ spoke, and the events of His life as a searchlight, people looked back at the scriptures revealed before His Coming, and discovered verses whose meanings were previously unknown but which refer to Him. The vast majority of prophetic references to Christ have been found in this way - an indication of the validity of the necessity of fulfillment and acceptance of Christ to an understanding of the meaning of these prophetic references.

18. 30 Pieces of Silver

The next occurrence in Matthew of a stated prophecy fulfilled is the following:

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;

And gave them for¹⁶ the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

Matthew 27:3-10

Although Matthew here states that "Jeremy the prophet" has given a prophecy regarding the thirty pieces of silver, no such prophecy can be found in the book of Jeremiah. What is the reason for this discrepancy? Many questions may arise, and there may be a definitive explanation, but I am not aware of one. In any case, as in the prophecy regarding "Nazarene" (Matthew 2:23) above, we cannot comment on the prophetic reference referred to by Matthew, because we are not sure what it is.

There is however a prophecy in the book of Zechariah which we can consider. Although not the one referred to by Matthew, it refers to the thirty pieces of silver. One thing to note regarding this prophecy and its fulfillment, is that whereas Matthew states that the Old Testament prophetic reference (Jeremiah's words) refers to the purchase of a field with the silver coins, the words of Zechariah say nothing of this.

Verses from Old Testament

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear¹⁷. So they weighed for my price¹⁸ thirty pieces of silver.

¹⁶ NIV: and used them to buy

¹⁷ NIV: keep it

¹⁸ NIV: paid me

And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

Zechariah 11:12-13

Commentary

The incident of Judas' betrayal of Christ for the price of thirty pieces of silver could not have been either predicted or led one to the Christ. Consider the words of Zechariah above. These verses present nothing that could have been taken as reference to a future event. I personally do not see what one could have predicted from this.

19. Parted My Garments

Verses from Old Testament

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Psalm 22:18

Predictions

These words appear to be the voice of the writer of the Psalm, in this case, David. I cannot see any predictions coming from these words.

Fulfillment

And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

Matthew 27:35

Commentary

Matthew here has revealed that the words spoken by David were actually spoken as if they were the words of his holy Descendant, Jesus. This sheds light on the bond between the two - a bond that was much more than that of mere blood relationship.

Although speaking in the voice of his Lord, and predicting with divine accuracy the details of His utter humiliation centuries before it was to occur, his words still offered the seeker after the Christ no help in finding Him. There was no hint of the great meaning of David's words, no signal that would have directed the seeker to Christ.

Once again, as with all other prophetic references to Christ, the holy meaning of the words of the prophet remain hidden to those who have not accepted Him, while at the same time they are a source of awe and wonder to those who have.

Chapter 7: How They Were Led to Christ

To conclude the presentation of proof of the principles introduced in this book, we look, in this chapter, at one more facet of evidence presented in the New Testament.

I am sure that for some, even after considering the difficulties in understanding the prophecies presented in previous chapters, there may still be a feeling that there were, indeed, souls that were led to Christ through them. There are many references in the New Testament to prophecies referring to Christ, and the circumstances of some of these at first do appear to confirm that prophecies were correctly understood and that they did lead people to Him. Thoughtful reflection on these verses, however, demonstrates otherwise.

The verse that first caught my attention and decided me to include a chapter dedicated to considering these circumstances was the following:

Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

John 1:45

Here we see a reference to two things: (1) someone finding Jesus, and (2) a reference to the sacred scripture referring to Him. One might assume from this verse of John that the two are related - that it was the scripture that caused Philip to recognize Christ. If we consider carefully the words of John, however, we see that there is really no evidence to support this initial impression. Such an impression must come from us making assumptions.

If it is through the scriptures that Philip came to believe, then what is the scripture? and what did he hear or see through which he witnessed its fulfillment? Neither John, nor any other book in the New Testament provides answers to these questions. For us to allow ourselves to think that Philip was

led by scripture to believe in Christ, we would have to assume certain things that simply are not in scripture.

How Philip actually did find Christ is found in the scriptures. John states:

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

John 1:43

It seems that it was Christ who found Philip, and not Philip who found Christ. Given this knowledge, however, there are still questions that must be answered: Why did Philip follow Him? How did he attain to the gift of faith? What made him know Who it was who addressed him? Was it scripture? Was it Christ's love? Was it His divine authority? What was it that touched the mind and heart of Philip? This, John does not say.

One might say that there may be other evidence that would suggest, not directly, but possibly indirectly, that Philip was led to Christ through the scriptures. Did the other early believers influence Philip? Might not they have reasoned with Philip? Can we find, if we look closely into the scriptures, something to suggest this? I certainly cannot.

John does mention in this context certain other disciples that were led to believe in Christ. He gives a trail of how the message that Jesus was the Christ was transmitted to His followers. Here is what his words reveal: Some were told that He was the Christ by those who already believed. But how had the first believers come to believe? Those who already believed had been told that Jesus was the Christ by John who referred to Jesus as the "*Lamb of God*" (Jn 1:36). Well, how did John know that Jesus was the Christ? He had a vision in which he "*saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him*" (Jn 1:32). And how did he know that this signified that Jesus was He that was to come after him? He was told by God that "*Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*" (Jn 1:33)

Although John's words do not give us a clue as to how Philip came to believe in Christ, we do know from them that Philip must have been familiar with the prophecies of Moses, and that he believed that Jesus was the One Whom Moses referred to. Having attained to this belief, having found the Object of the scriptures, the way was then opened for Philip to understand

all the scriptures referring to Him. ***It would be reasonable to assume that from then on, Philip's approach to understanding the Messianic Prophecies would not be one of interpreting them and looking for their fulfillment, but rather would be simply to understand how they were fulfilled in Jesus. This approach to the understanding of prophecy, I submit, is the one intended by God.***

When I began this chapter, I had a vague feeling that there were actually many such instances in the New Testament in which prophecies were referred to in a way that could be viewed as implying that they were the cause of people believing in Christ. Upon study of the New Testament, however, it became clear that this initial vague feeling was not correct. A careful look at the New Testament reveals the startling fact that there are not hundreds, not even dozens, but only two other instances, besides the one mentioned above, in which it appears that prophecies may have led people to find and believe in the Christ.

Of course, you do not need to take my word on this matter. I encourage you to read through the entire the New Testament and search for yourself. To do justice to the subject, it must be considered as a whole. And when and if you do make such a search through the New Testament, I ask you to consider, were the people led to Him by prophecy, or were they led by His humility, His majesty, by His healing powers, by His words and example, by dreams, by visions, or angels.

Following are the two other instances in the New Testament that at first may seem to indicate that scriptures led to belief in Christ:

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men¹⁹ from the east to Jerusalem,

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

¹⁹ NIV: Magi

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:1-11

To many, these words of Matthew indicate that it was common knowledge where the Christ would be born. At first glance, then, it seems that the Bethlehem prophecy was indeed understood, and that as we can see here, it did lead people to the Christ.

Let's look closely, however, at how the Magi were led to Christ. First of all, they had somehow come to believe that the king of the Jews had been born. We are not told how they had come to this belief, but we do know that they somehow had knowledge of this. Had one of the wise men had a dream? Were they visited by an angel or the holy ghost? We do not know. And how were they inspired to know that the star that appeared in the East had anything to do with His birth? The New Testament does not say.

Furthermore, not only did they believe that He had been born, but they knew of His exalted station. They had come not merely to visit Him; nor to

pay their respects: no, they had come to **worship** Him. They knew that He was divine. They had set out from their homes, traveling for a sacred purpose, and were so certain that they would find Him that they had prepared themselves for their expected meeting to the extent that they were carrying with them precious gifts to lay before Him. They had no doubt that they would find Him.

These men (and some assume that there were three, but only because the Bible mentions three gifts - it says nothing about how many men there were), in such extraordinary circumstances, possibly led by the star that had appeared, arrived in Jerusalem.

Now, consider, all this took place before the wise men had any knowledge of any prophecy referring to Bethlehem. So, was the cause of their belief in Him, the words of this prophecy? Hardly. Their belief was based on other things about which the New Testament says nothing.

The question does arise, of course, "Well, maybe they knew He had been born and that He was King, but didn't they still have to find Him? Could they have found the place of His birth without the prophecy?" Well certainly, they didn't know that the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem until after they had been told. We know this because they asked of the place of His birth. This seems to indicate the prophecy was necessary to their finding the Christ.

But, consider also, how did they actually find the Christ? Did they "*Go and search diligently for the young child*"? No. It was the star that led them to the precise location of the Savior's birth. Unless you feel that the star also required to be pointed in the direction of Bethlehem by the chief priests, the guidance of the chief priests did not decide the outcome of their journey. This seems to indicate that something other than the scriptures led them to find the Christ. If not for the star, if they had simply gone to Bethlehem without its help, could they have found Him? Could they have found Him by asking people, "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*"

It's quite interesting to me that one could imagine that the Bethlehem prophecy could have led people to find Christ in the first place. I personally do not understand how this could be, even if one could have been sure that they had properly understood this prophecy.

Imagine someone searching for the Christ by this prophecy? What, for example, could they have done to find Him once they had arrived in

Bethlehem? Could they have asked people where the "king" was? Could they have searched for all the newborn children and asked the parents regarding the circumstances of the birth? Could they have interviewed the townspeople to see if there was anything unusual at all of recent report, and by this try to find the child? I suppose this is possible, but was this what was intended by God? What would have happened if after their search, they had found nothing unusual about the recent births, and instead had merely caused the people, the government, and the religious leaders to think strangely of them? What would you, yourself, have done if you had searched Bethlehem and found nothing?

Found nothing?

Now, I am sure some readers considering what I have written above may question my line of reasoning. They may be thinking that surely, if one had searched earnestly enough, he or she would have come upon the holy family. After all, Bethlehem, could not have been large, and with effort and the help of God, and given the holy circumstances of the birth, He surely would have been found. Those who come to this conclusion, however, have allowed themselves quite a convenient assumption. And by this assumption they have removed, without basis, a dimension of life that would have complicated immensely the seeker's search. They have focused on an outcome and then shaped their "picture" to produce that outcome. But what they have done, is also nothing more than what we all do when we consider the past - and this by reason of our not having immediate access to the details of what we are trying to understand - we narrow the possibilities, simplify the circumstances, and generously whittle away at reality to fit into our own preconceived image.

The assumption is this: that the one searching for the Christ had arrived in Bethlehem at precisely the proper time. But how could one have known what the proper time was, and that he or she was living at that time? How could anyone searching for Christ have been sure that they hadn't arrived in Bethlehem eighty five years late? Or three hundred years early? The prophecy was given centuries before His Coming, and it gave no clue about the time it was to be fulfilled.

If the Bethlehem prophecy was indeed intended to lead the faithful to Christ, had God intended that they were to have settled in Bethlehem and spent the rest of their lives making their "inquiries"? Did God intend that

they go to Bethlehem and wait? And after years, or generations, of not finding Him, then what? Wouldn't they possibly have felt that God would have to reveal the "*ruler in Israel*" in His own time?

To me, it is clear that it would simply take much more than this prophecy to find the Christ. All those who worshipped Jesus at the nativity - His parents, the shepherds, the Magi - were given some kind of special blessing to be allowed to recognize Him. In the case of the Magi, we know that they were somehow in communication with God on a higher than normal level: God had led them to the knowledge of His Son's birth and greatness, had guided them by a star, and when they had completed their holy mission, we know that they were warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod.

Of course, we all have our own understanding of these events. I personally do not feel that the Bethlehem prophecy can take credit for the Magis' belief in and finding of the Christ. You may. If you do, then certainly you must consider this an outstanding instance of the power of prophecy and an exception to certain assertions that I make in this book. In any case, however, if this is an exception, as far as I can see, it is the only exception, for it is certain, that although the Magi may have been led by this prophecy, none of the Jewish people were led to Christ by way of this or any other prophecy.

To me, the incident of the Magi signifies a divine invitation to the people of Jerusalem to seek out their Lord. If you'll forgive my paraphrasing, basically, the Magi came and said "We know that your king is born, somewhere. Tell us where." The Magi announced His Coming.

Tragically, no one responded to this invitation.

And many of the people believed on Him

And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

So there was a division among the people because of him.

And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

*They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee?
Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

And every man went unto his own house.

John 7:31-53

These verses of John make clear that it was correctly assumed by the people of Christ's time that His birthplace would be Bethlehem. No doubt this thinking had been given them by the Pharisees who appear to boldly assert the same. At first glance then, to some it may appear that this prophecy did indeed lead people to the Christ. There was a division among the people; some believed, and some didn't. Some recognized Him as the Christ, while others questioned His fulfilling the prophecies.

Upon thoughtful examination of these verses, however, it becomes clear that there is not only no real evidence that anyone in the situation described above was led to the Christ by the prophecy of Bethlehem, but it actually shows that the prophecy was a **barrier** to belief in Him.

There is a subtle but important difference between, on the one hand, knowing the meaning of a prophecy beforehand and thereby using it to seek out the Christ, and, on the other hand, realizing that the Christ has come, and then going back and considering the prophecies that He was supposed to have fulfilled. The former is, according to my understanding, quite an unlikely possibility. The latter, however, represents the interaction intended by God between prophecies and man.

In the above verses that John has recorded, it is quite clear that no one in that situation was led to believe that Jesus was the Christ because they believed that the Christ would come from Bethlehem. These verses offer additional confirmation that everyone who believed in Him must have had some other reason for believing than prophecy. How do we know this? We know this because John makes it clear that the people assumed that Jesus was from Galilee. To paraphrase, the people said: "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? But our understanding is that He should come from Bethlehem."

For the people of Christ's time, then, the prophecy of Bethlehem would be more of an obstacle than an aid in finding the Christ. If someone were looking for a ruler from Bethlehem, they would not have found Him. In the

minds of the people, Jesus was Jesus of Nazareth, a Galilean, the leader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Jesus Himself said "*I am Jesus of Nazareth*" (Acts 22:8). There is no mention of Jesus of Bethlehem in the Bible. In fact, after the story of Christ's birth, that is the last we hear of any association of Jesus with Bethlehem. It is possible, of course, that during Christ's ministry, it may have been explained to some that Jesus was indeed born in Bethlehem, and that this may have confirmed some in their belief in Him. There is, however, nothing in the New Testament to suggest this.

Although it appears that none were led to Christ through the Bethlehem prophecy, a question still remains regarding the understanding of this prophecy, namely: Was it correctly understood before it was fulfilled? The Bible clearly shows that it was - half of it, that is. The religious leaders did correctly understand the part of this prophecy referring to Bethlehem. But does understanding **part** of a prophecy mean anything? Should they have been trusted to interpret the other half, the one referring to "*ruler in Israel*"? Did they really **know** what they were talking about, or were they **guessing**? If the answer to this question does not seem clear to you, then let's try asking another, more-to-the-point question: Should the people have followed the interpretation of the religious leaders, or not?

To really understand the meaning of a prophecy requires some divine confirmation, as in the case of the prophecies we now understand regarding the First Coming of Christ. Since we see how God has fulfilled them, then we **know** what they mean; we're not guessing any more.

If the Pharisees had sought with humility from Christ Himself, the answer to their questions, they could have attained unto true understanding of the scriptures. But the New Testament reveals the fact that they essentially did not have any questions. "*Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet*", is not a question, and it betrays an attitude whose sole object is opposition. Having essentially no questions regarding Christ, they could receive no answers, and they were therefore, unable to attain salvation.

The people, however, had questions: "*Hath not the scriptures said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?*" They also had an interesting dilemma: where to find answers. Here the seeker had to decide whether to ask the religious leaders who had denounced the Person in question, or the Person in question who had denounced the religious leaders.

Of course, the religious leaders, who assumed that they correctly understood the prophecies, would have said that when He comes, there will be no questions: He will be a ruler, will save us from oppression, will promulgate the same glorious teachings which we now have, and will exalt us over other peoples. O, for the glory of that day!

They thought they knew it all.

The fact that none were led to Christ through prophecies, does not mean that the prophecies did not influence the people of Christ's time. They certainly did. They did not, however, influence everyone in the same way. To those who disbelieved, the prophecies were a barrier; to those who believed, divine confirmation.

Chapter 8: The Return of Christ

Having demonstrated in the previous seven chapters, by the authority of the Bible, that prophecies can only be understood after they have been fulfilled and only by those who already believe, I would like to return to the theme of the introduction to this book.

On the day that Jesus approached Peter and Andrew, as they were casting a net into the sea, Jesus had come to them with no outward signs that He was the Messiah. His name was not Immanuel as promised by Isaiah (Isa 7:14), He was not a literal ruler (Mic 5:2) or king (Jer 23:5), Elijah had not literally appeared before His Coming (Mal 5:4), He did not sit upon a throne (Isa 9:7).

How fortunate were Peter and Andrew that the promises of the Bible had not become an obstacle to them. Jesus appeared in a manner that ran counter to everyone's expectations - His humble position in life, His call to self-sacrifice and love, His command to forgive even one's enemies, His emphasis on the life eternal over this mortal world, were unforeseen characteristics of the Messiah. The Coming of the Messiah was for the joy of the world, and there were some who simply responded to Him with joy.

The reality is, according to the Bible, that God carries out His Plan in ways that surpass our understanding. Though the claim that the Christ has already returned, and that the building of His Kingdom on earth is well underway, may seem impossible, it is no more impossible than that the Son of a carpenter was the Son of God.

And so, it is to the peoples of the world, in this day, that the opportunity is given, to respond with the joy befitting the Advent of the Holy One of God.

The Person whom I speak of is the Persian Nobleman of the 19th century, known to history as Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God. He appeared at a time when movements throughout the Christian world were confidently announcing Christ's imminent Return. Bahá'u'lláh's credentials were historic.

He was a direct descendant of King David, fulfilling the ancient promise that the Messiah would sit upon David's throne. He willingly endured forty years of imprisonment and exile for proclaiming that He was the One promised to all religions. From His prison, He addressed letters to the world's kings, rulers, and religious leaders calling upon them to hearken to the Word of God, to establish peace, and to accept Him. He warned them in explicit language of the consequences of their actions, and predicted their fates with an accuracy that can only be understood as prophetic. Thousands were called upon to give their lives for Him, as the religious leaders and government arose to snuff out the new Faith. The farther He was exiled from His native land, the greater the number of those who recognized him and arose to teach His Faith. He had sacrificed the wealth, comfort and social position that were His by birthright. Though innocent of any crime, He was beaten, poisoned, stoned and maligned. Yet, He feared no one, and never wavered in His proclamation of the Word of God. He wrote extensively of the need to establish world peace, the unity of religions and races, the need for a universal language and script, the necessity for a supreme court for the entire world, the equality of women and men as well as many other far-sighted necessities for the establishment of a thriving, spiritual world civilization - the Kingdom of God on Earth. He called upon His followers to purify their hearts, to consecrate their lives to the betterment of the world, to prefer others before themselves, and to associate with all peoples and religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.

All these are facts of history, open to everyone for examination.

There were many - and firsthand and eyewitness accounts are well documented - who responded to Bahá'u'lláh in the same manner that Peter and Andrew followed Jesus: they instantly believed and devoted their lives to Him. That same divine love, and that same surrender to that love is seen through the life of Bahá'u'lláh. And since that time, the Faith that He established has encompassed the planet, to the extent that it is now the second-most geographically widespread (after Christianity) religion in the world (1992 Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year).

And now the questions is, "How do we respond?"

If Bahá'u'lláh is, indeed, the Christ Returned, then we should respond to Him with eagerness. But how will we know? Jesus said:

You shall know them by their fruits.

Matthew 7:16

And what are the “*fruits*” of which Jesus speaks?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Galatians 5:22-24, RSV

The way we will know if Bahá'u'lláh is the Christ Returned is the same way that we know today that Jesus is the Christ. We can learn about His Life and Words, His sacrifice and love, and through earnest prayer can be confirmed through inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And because prophecy constitutes an important part of peoples' expectations of the Second Coming, I have devoted the body of this book to considering the nature of prophecy. The First Coming of Christ was a divine gift to the world; His Second Coming is likewise. At His First Coming, we know that for some people, their understanding of prophecy got in the way of receiving this divine gift. In retrospect, it is easy to see that a literal interpretation of the Word of God led to this misunderstanding.

If we consider thoughtfully, we see that most of the current understanding of prophecies pointing to the Second Coming is literal in nature. I offer to the reader the thought that once again, the prophecies referring to the Coming of Christ have a deeper spiritual meaning.

With this, dear reader, I wish you Godspeed and pray that in your life you find the happiness that the Lord has promised to all those who seek Him:

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8

If you are interested in investigating Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be the Christ Returned, there is a wealth of information available for this purpose.

One resource is a book that I have written entitled "*The Second Coming*", which is available for free download here:

www.reasonstogether.com

The following links provide information on Bahá'u'lláh and the Bahá'í Faith:

A photographic narrative of the life of Bahá'u'lláh

www.bahauallah.org

International Bahá'í Website:

www.bahai.org

About the Bahá'í Faith:

info.bahai.org

Selected Writings:

reference.bahai.org

Photographs of the Bahá'í community, historical figures, events and activities, houses of worship, and holy places:

media.bahai.org

For a complete discussion of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy by Bahá'u'lláh, the reader may want to consider the following works:

Every Eye Shall See, by Gary Matthews

The Challenge of Bahá'u'lláh, by Gary Matthews

He Cometh With Clouds, by Gary Matthews

I Shall Come Again, by Hushidar Motlagh

Lord of Lords, by Hushidar Motlagh

King of Kings, by Hushidar Motlagh

A Thief in the Night, by William Sears

The Prophecies of Jesus, by Michael Sours