

The Map of Christmas

The Week's Devotions

Genesis 3
Genesis 38
1 Chronicles 27/28
Malachi 4
Matthew 1:1-17
Psalm 2

Luke 24:27
And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.¹

As you reflect upon the suggested readings, what do you learn about the "seed?"

What can you learn about the relationship between God and man?

Do the Christmas prophecies tell us anything about the unfulfilled prophecies?

When the Messiah comes/came, is there a way to identify Him?

Does luck, fate, or providence control lives?

In the 1700's a little man in England, a cobbler by trade, who kept a map of the world on a wall of his workshop so that he could pray for the nations of the world, became burdened for a definite missionary outreach. When he shared his burden at a meeting of ministers, he was told by one of the senior men of God: "Young man, sit down. When God wants to convert the heathen, He will do it without your help or mine."

¹All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1998, c1982.

But William Carey did not let the fire of his enthusiasm be dampened by such a response, and eventually he left the shores of England for those of India, where he engaged in pioneer missionary work, doing exploits for God.²

My wife and daughter recently drove to Philadelphia to attend the Women of Faith conference. They had directions but still managed to get lost. Isn't this the way life is? We faithfully study the maps, then when we look at the real world, the lines do not translate into real roads and we go off the wrong direction.

God provided the Israelites a road map to salvation – the Old Testament – a map that pointed to the Messiah, the Savior, the Christ – Jesus! We need to be careful not to be like the Jewish people and miss the Christ because we take a wrong turn.

There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah. We will focus on a few of the ones that point to the Messiah's birth – after all, that is what the Christmas season is all about.

The prophecies are designed to provide the Jewish people, indeed, all people with hope – and with a manner of identifying the Messiah when He arrived. We must remember, as we read the prophecies, that many had an important, immediate meaning to the Jewish nation. The prophecies had both a "near" meaning to the Jews and a "far" meaning for all of mankind.

Messiah properly means "anointed," as in the anointed one of God. Christ is the Greek version.

How can we know the Christ, when He arrives is the right person. How are we to know that Jesus is the Messiah? The Old Testament road map answers these questions for us.

The Old Testament was completed many hundred years before the birth of Christ. Yet, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, fulfills all the prophecies about the Messiah's birth, life, and death, an event that, from a practical point of view, is mathematically impossible. The New Testament points

²Tan, Paul Lee, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, (Garland, Texas: Bible Communications, Inc.) 1996.

to the credentials of Jesus as Messiah, as the Son of God and Savior, as a unique Person in relation to all others, and as King of the world.

Let us look, then, at some of the prophecies that point to Jesus as the Messiah.

From the beginning, God placed signs along the side of the road, directing all of us to the Messiah. The major highway we travel is the road of the "seed."

- Gen 3:15 is the first evangelistic message of the Bible. God curses Satan and holds forth the promise of hope for mankind, yet the prophecy is really directed toward Satan, and is one not only of hope, but also of struggle. The seed of woman and the seed of the serpent will struggle throughout recorded time, while the real battle is between Jesus and Satan. For us, it is important to recognize that the promise of delivery and victory is contained in this one short verse.

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

- Gen 4:25-26 Adam does not really figure directly into God's salvation equation. God provided Adam and Eve with coats of skins when He expelled them from the Garden, an act suggesting the sacrificing of an animal and the giving of blood for the covering. But the next road sign is the Godly line of Seth, Adam's third son. Seth means "to set" or "to appoint." Seth is appointed as the father of the line of godly people which will lead to the Savior. From Seth comes Noah and Abraham. Gen 9:26 finds the LORD, the God of Shem, being blessed. This points to a further division in Seth's line, namely, the choosing of one of Noah's sons to be the provider of the godly line.

- With Abraham, God changes His method of dealing with man. Heretofore, God had dealt with mankind, generally, as a whole. With Abraham, God picks one man. God covenants with Abraham, an unconditional covenant. God made all of the promises. Gen 12:1-3.

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will

bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

The covenant includes a specific portion of land and a specific nation (Israel), but there is a universal blessing upon all of the nations of the world. This blessing is, as we discover while we travel the road of the Old Testament, the Messiah. This promise is so important it is repeated to Abraham again in Chapters 13, 15, and 17.

- God continues to deal with individuals in the form of Abraham's son and grandson – Isaac (Gen 17:19; 21:21) and Jacob (Gen 25:22-23; 28:13-14), although with Jacob there is a clear choice of Jacob over his older brother Esau. The on-going split of family line continues with the choice of Judah over the other twelve sons of Jacob – Gen 49:10

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

The scepter refers to the royal line.

Shiloh means peace or peaceful, looking forward to the promise of Isaiah 9:6. Shiloh, then, is the seed of woman and the road to travel as Judah becomes the royal line of the blessing.

- Years of "silence" follow, first as Abraham's children live and multiply in Egypt, then, during the period of the Judges after the Nation has entered the promised land. Then, God returns to the scene by picking a specific branch of the family of Judah and, thereafter, narrowing it down once more. In 1 Sam 16:1 (Isa 11:1, 10) the family of Jesse is chosen to be the bearer of the seed. Of Jesse's sons, David is chosen to be the father of the royal line (1 Sam 16:12, 13; Is 9:6-7; 2 Sam 7:12-16). The prophecy is further given to pass this seed through David's son, Solomon (2 Sam 7:12-17; 1 Chron 28:4-5). Many of the Old Testament stories show God's unique preservation of this line (such as the saving of Joash in 2 Kings 11:1-3)

Along with this special preservation of the line, the prophets bring a unique picture of the Messiah. Many of these special pictures relate to the birth of Christ. For example,

- There is to be a forerunner to the Christ (Isa 40:3; Malachi 3:1), who is, of course, John the Baptist. [Mark 1:2-4]
- There is the miracle of the Virgin birth (Isa 7:13-14). [Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35]
- As an aside, Deuteronomy 23:2 declares that an illegitimate son could not enter the congregation of the Lord until the tenth generation. This would mean that such a son could not serve as king or priest. Perez, the son of Judah, was illegitimate by his daughter-in-law, Tamar. Based upon Matthew's genealogy (Matt 1:3-6), David was the tenth generation from Perez.
- The royal line is cursed and cut off, yet the promise of the Seed is preserved (Jer 22:28-30). [Matt 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38]
- Daniel predicts the time of Messiah's birth (Dan 9:24-27). [Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-38]
- Micah predicts the place of Messiah's birth (Micah 5:2-3). [Luke 2:1-7; Matt 2:1-6]
- Even though he is a prophet for hire, Balaam predicts the celestial announcement of the birth (Num 24:17) [Matt 2:1-2] and the arrival of the Magi is foreshadowed in Psalm 72 (esp. v10 & 15).

So, who will be the Messiah? What will He be like? Based upon the above,

- His birth will be supernatural
- He will come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David
- He will be a male child
- The time of His birth will be around 1 BC/AD
- He will be born in Bethlehem
- His birth circumstances will identify Him as Messiah
- His life will fulfill the many other prophecies of Scripture

Consider the above in relation to Luke 1:32-33; 3:23-38; and Matt 1:1, 6-7. Who is the Messiah?

What does all of this provide?

- Provides Hope to the Nation of Israel
- Is the basis of the believer's faith
- Is the representation of at least a portion of the Gospel in the Old Testament