

# “The Minor Prophets”

Hosea - Malachi; Zechariah 12:10-13:1 <sup>1</sup>

Well, today we complete our quick tour of the Old Testament, which is also the Jewish Bible. You'll remember from last week that the fourth and fifth sections of the Old Testament are known as “the Major Prophets” and “the Minor Prophets,” with the Major Prophets being so designated primarily because their writings are generally longer than those of the Minor Prophets.

I'm still rather amazed that nearly a third of the Hebrew Scriptures and nearly a quarter of the Bible as a whole represents God's repeated, concerted, passionate, and persistent call to Israel to repent, thus averting the destruction that could finally be forestalled no longer. Bear in mind that while there is indeed a future component to the prophetic books, the prophets were actually far more concerned with calling their contemporaries back to their faithful covenant relationship with God than they were with predicting the future.

As I mentioned last week, the general movement in most of the prophetic books is from judgment to redemption, from bad news to good news. Here once again are five things to remember that capture the central thrust of these prophetic works:

1. The prophets firmly **asserted** that God was speaking through them.
2. The prophets repeatedly **affirmed** that God had chosen Israel for covenant relationship.
3. The prophets sadly **reported** that the majority of Israel had sinned against God and that special covenant relationship.
4. The prophets passionately **warned** of God's purifying judgment.
5. The prophets consistently **promised** that God would bring renewal and Hope on the other side of judgment.<sup>2</sup>

With this brief introduction, then, let's look quickly at the twelve Minor Prophets. I'm going to talk about them in the order in which they actually appeared rather than in the typical order in our Bibles.

## JOEL

Scholars vary between thinking that Joel was the first of all the writing prophets, long before the fall of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C., and thinking that he was the last of the writing prophets, after the fall of the southern kingdom in 587 B.C. While it could certainly be argued either way, I'm opting for the earlier date.

The major theme of Joel is “the Day of the Lord,” a day of God's cataclysmic judgment that appears often in the prophetic books.<sup>3</sup> Although the Jews tended to look forward to the Day of the Lord as God's vindication of Israel vis-à-vis her neighbors, the prophets warned that judgment would begin with God's own household.

Joel's prophecies were directed to the southern kingdom of Judah, through which God's covenant of salvation would eventually be fulfilled. Joel begins with repeated calls to repentance so that judgment may be averted.

---

<sup>1</sup> A sermon by David C. Stancil, Ph.D., delivered at the Columbia Baptist Fellowship in Columbia, Maryland on July 21, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), pp. 1230-1231.

<sup>3</sup> Joel mentions it more than anyone else (1:15, 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14). See also Isaiah 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Malachi 4:5.

**Joel 1:14**

<sup>14</sup> *Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD.*

**Joel 2:13**

<sup>13</sup> *Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.*

God knows that the people will not repent and that judgment will be required; yet at the same time God offers this memorable promise of restoration after exile.

**Joel 2:25**

<sup>25</sup> ***“I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm— my great army that I sent among you.***

In this very first of the prophetic writings, God foretells the Day of Pentecost far into the future, a “Day of the Lord” of a very different sort. Peter quoted this passage in his great Pentecost Sermon (Acts 2:17-21).

**Joel 2:28-32**

<sup>28</sup> *“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. <sup>29</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. <sup>30</sup> I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. <sup>31</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. <sup>32</sup> **And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.***

**AMOS**

Amos was the first of the prophets God sent to the northern kingdom of Israel. Echoing the words of Joel, Amos warns that the Day of the Lord is going to be a day of judgment, not of hope, and he, too, warns that external forms of worship without true inner repentance are repulsive to God, who will not be manipulated.

The years leading up to the destruction of Israel were economically prosperous and relatively peaceful. The people wrongly associated their prosperity with God’s favor, and became caught up in materialism, luxurious living, and oppression of the poor. That description should sound familiar to us in 21<sup>st</sup>-century America . . . .

**Amos 5:18**

<sup>18</sup> *Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light.*

**Amos 5:21-24**

<sup>21</sup> *“I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. <sup>22</sup> Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. <sup>23</sup> Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. <sup>24</sup> **But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!***

**Amos 8:9-12**

<sup>9</sup> *“In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. <sup>10</sup> I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day. <sup>11</sup> “The days are coming,” declares the*

Sovereign LORD, “when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, **but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.** <sup>12</sup> People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.

## JONAH

Appearing during the same period as Joel, Amos, and Hosea, Jonah was not sent to Israel but rather to Nineveh, the capital of the proud Assyrian Empire. Although the drama of Jonah’s experience with the great fish tends to overshadow it, the message of the book is really God’s compassion toward people of all nations, not just toward Israel.

### Jonah 3:1-5

<sup>1</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: <sup>2</sup> “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.” <sup>3</sup> Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, ‘**Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.**’ The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

### Jonah 3:10

<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

### Jonah 4:10-11

<sup>10</sup> But the LORD said, “You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. <sup>11</sup> **And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?**”

## HOSEA

Hosea was the last of the prophets to the northern kingdom before its destruction. As frequently happened with the prophets, God told Hosea to live out a parable that graphically portrayed God’s message. While the Bible often uses images of marital love to illustrate the kind of intimate love God desires with us, the Bible also uses the converse images of prostitution and marital unfaithfulness to portray the unfaithfulness of our love for God.

In order to portray Israel’s unfaithfulness, God told Hosea to marry Gomer, a prostitute, and to have children by her. Later, when Gomer ran away to return to her former occupation, God told Hosea to go to the brothel and buy her back as a symbol of God’s faithful efforts to reclaim the love of Israel . . . but, like Gomer, Israel’s heart was never truly changed.

### Hosea 1:2

<sup>2</sup> When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD.”

### Hosea 3:1-2

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” <sup>2</sup> So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.

**Hosea 4:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. <sup>2</sup> There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. <sup>3</sup> Because of this the land dries up, and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea are swept away.

**MICAH** (followed by Isaiah)

Prophecy in the same general time period as Amos and Hosea, Micah spoke to both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah as they experienced a season of economic prosperity that was having very negative spiritual results. The sins against which Micah warned included idolatry (1:7, 5:12-14), the unjust seizure of property (2:2,9), the failure of civil leadership (3:1-3, 9-10, 7:3), poor spiritual leadership (3:5-7, 11), corrupt business practices (6:10-12), and the belief that religious observances such as animal sacrifices covered over all those things with God (6:6-7).

Micah's analysis resulted in a pronouncement that many regard as the moral high-water mark of the Old Testament. You already know what it is, though you may not know that you know:

**Micah 6:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? <sup>7</sup> Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? <sup>8</sup> He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. **And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

Like the other prophets, Micah's message was both for the people to whom he was speaking as well as for times yet to be. Those future times beyond God's judgment would bring the fulfillment of all that God had promised:

**Micah 7:18-20**

<sup>18</sup> Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. <sup>19</sup> You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. <sup>20</sup> You will be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.

**Micah 5:2**

<sup>2</sup> **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,** though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

**Micah 4:1-4**

<sup>1</sup> In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. <sup>2</sup> Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. **They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.** <sup>4</sup> **Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid,** for the LORD Almighty has spoken.

## NAHUM

Nahum's prophecy is a sequel to, and a dramatic contrast with, the book of Jonah. Jonah's mission to Nineveh was probably sometime in the first half of the eighth century B.C., warning that large and powerful city of God's impending judgment. To Jonah's dismay, the city heeded his message, repented, and was spared God's judgment.

This repentance didn't last long, though. After about 745 B.C., Assyria became the dominant power in the Near East through bloodshed and massacre, cruelty and torture, destruction, plundering, and exiling such as has seldom been seen in human history.<sup>4</sup> Nineveh was the capital of this empire, and Nahum's prophecy is given entirely to the foretelling of its destruction, which came in 612 B.C. Shortly after that, the Assyrians disappeared forever from the earth.

### **Nahum 1:3**

<sup>3</sup> *The LORD is slow to anger but great in power; the LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished.*

### **Nahum 2:6**

<sup>6</sup> *The river gates are thrown open and the palace collapses.*

Nahum did include a little bit of good news, at least for Israel:

### **Nahum 1:7**

<sup>7</sup> *The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him,*

### **Nahum 1:15**

<sup>15</sup> *Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.*

## ZEPHANIAH

Prophesying several generations after the fall of the northern kingdom, Zephaniah joined Joel in "proclaiming the Day of the Lord," a day of judgment for all who forsake their covenantal relationship with and responsibilities toward the Lord, while at the same time being a day of blessing for the faithful.

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, one of the few good kings in Judah who tried to turn the nation back to God, but Josiah's efforts proved to be "too little, too late." In spite of having seen God's judgment upon the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom continued headlong in spiritual rebellion against God.

### **Zephaniah 1:18**

<sup>18</sup> *Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath." In the fire of his jealousy the whole earth will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live on the earth.*

As was usually the case, Zephaniah's warning of judgment also included promises of God's future blessing. In 3:17, Zephaniah wrote what has become my favorite verse in all of Scripture:

<sup>4</sup> *ESV Study Bible*, p. 1709.

**Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV1977)**

*17 The LORD your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will comfort you with his love. He will rejoice over you with singing."*

**HABAKKUK** (followed by Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel)

Habakkuk was probably a contemporary of Zephaniah and Jeremiah in Judah and of Daniel and Ezekiel in Babylon. Habakkuk's prophecy is unusual in that it never addresses the people of Judah directly but rather records a dialogue between the prophet and God, a dialogue that has moments both humorous and sublime.

We begin with humor, as Habakkuk challenges God to answer his complaint against Judah, and then he essentially says, "Okay. Now I'm going to stand right here until you give me an acceptable answer":

**Habakkuk 1:2**

*2 How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save?*

**Habakkuk 2:1**

*1 I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.*

God does answer, with a reply reminiscent of God's answer to Job (Job 38-41):

**Habakkuk 1:5**

*5 "Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.*

**Habakkuk 2:14**

*14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*

**Habakkuk 2:20**

*20 The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.*

Finally, as Micah gave us the "moral high-water mark" of the Old Testament, Habakkuk ends with what might be called the Old Testament's "high-water mark of faith":

**Habakkuk 3:17-19**

*17 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, <sup>18</sup> yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.*

*19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.*

**OBADIAH** (followed by Lamentations)

The first of the Minor Prophets to write after the destruction of Jerusalem (about the same time that Jeremiah probably wrote Lamentations), Obadiah expands on what Lamentations 4:22 announces—restoration for God's people but doom for the neighboring nation of Edom.

You may remember that the Edomites were the descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau, and that they were one of Israel's neighbors directly to the east. Also known as Idumea, the area

from which Herod the Great would later come, the great city of Edom was Petra, a city carved out of living rock, which some of you have probably visited.

As with many of the conflicts that continue to this day in that part of the world, the conflict between Israel and Edom had its origin in the divisions between Isaac and Ishmael, and between Jacob and Esau. During Israel's desperate crisis of the Babylonian conquest and captivity, the Edomites should have assisted their kinsmen, but they did not, siding instead with the foreign invaders and taking economic advantage of Israel's misfortune.

Once again, Obadiah's message included both judgment and hope:

#### **Obadiah 1:4**

*<sup>4</sup> Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD.*

#### **Obadiah 1:21**

*<sup>21</sup> Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD's.*

### **HAGGAI**

Haggai and Zechariah both spoke for God to the discouraged exiles who had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. The book of Haggai records five prophetic oracles during the period August 29-December 18, 520 B.C., all calculated to get the people moving on rebuilding the Temple. The repatriates have now been back for nearly twenty years, and they have yet to begin rebuilding the house of the Lord.

You may remember from our overview of Ezra that although the people did rebuild the Temple, it was not much compared with Solomon's temple (Ezra 3:12; Haggai 2:3). Although the Second Temple began modestly, God promised through Haggai that better days were ahead. This passage is one of those Handel used in *Messiah*<sup>5</sup>:

#### **Haggai 2:6-9**

*<sup>6</sup> "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup> I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. . . . <sup>9</sup> 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."*

### **ZECHARIAH**

Zechariah's ministry began at the same time as Haggai's, and he began with the same message: "Rebuild the Temple!" But while Haggai's prophetic ministry lasted only a few months, Zechariah's ministry continued for some forty years. While chapters 1-8 of Zechariah are similar in tone and message to Haggai, Zechariah 9-14 is much more similar to Malachi, who came a generation or two later.

In those later chapters, Zechariah used spectacular imagery to foretell the coming of the Messiah, the "Branch" whom God would send to rescue his people and to reign over all the earth (3:8). Zechariah is one of our most important prophetic books, giving detailed messianic

<sup>5</sup> George Frideric Handel, *Messiah*, 1741.

references that were clearly fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>6</sup> We'll look at several verses from Zechariah in a moment.<sup>7</sup>

## MALACHI

Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament, both in order and in chronology, and probably comes from the same general time period as Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther in the mid-fifth century B.C. It's been a long time, now, since Haggai and Zechariah urged the people to rebuild the Temple, and, while the people don't seem to be blatantly idolatrous, there are significant problems nonetheless. The people seem to be relatively orthodox in their beliefs, but theirs has become a dead orthodoxy, form without faith.

Beyond this, the former prophecies of a renewed golden age have not yet materialized. In contrast to those glowing promises, the harsh reality of the people's lives was characterized by economic privation, prolonged drought, crop failure, and pestilence (3:10 ff.).<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon, Judah was now an insignificant territory of about 20 by 30 miles, with a population of perhaps 150,000 people.

In such a situation, God's blessings seemed "long, long ago and far, far away," and the people's religious expression was halfhearted at best. Malachi's goal was to call the people back to heart-felt faith, using the rhetorical method of question and answer: "*I have loved you,*" says the LORD. "*But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'*" (Malachi 1:2).

It is in Malachi that we find God's most-quoted exhortation to tithing:

### Malachi 3:10

<sup>10</sup> *Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*

Malachi also spoke of "the Day of the Lord," in ways immortalized by Handel's *Messiah*:

### Malachi 3:1-2

<sup>1</sup> *"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. <sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.*

Malachi ends with the Old Testament's final sign of the coming Messiah, which Jesus would later declare fulfilled through John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11).

### Malachi 4:5

<sup>5</sup> *"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.*

<sup>6</sup> *Life Application Bible*, p. 1501.

<sup>7</sup> "The book of Zechariah is densely mined for quotations by the NT, whose authors discerned in it several prophecies concerning the Messiah's coming. The clearest instances come from [Zechariah 8:16](#) (in [Ephesians 4:25](#)), [Zechariah 9:9](#) (in [Matthew 21:5](#) and [John 12:15](#)), [Zechariah 11:12-13](#) (in [Matthew 27:9-10](#)), [Zechariah 12:10](#) (in [John 19:37](#)), and [Zechariah 13:7](#) (in [Matthew 26:31](#) and [Mark 14:27](#)). In addition to these are numerous allusions, which are sometimes difficult to assess; one estimate, however, finds about 54 passages from Zechariah echoed in about 67 different places in the NT, with the lion's share of these found in the book of Revelation" (*ESV Study Bible* introduction to Zechariah, Crossway, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> *ESV Study Bible*, p. 1771.

## HOMILY

One of the most frequent and most popular activities on planet earth is the attempt to know the future. In fact, I suspect that nearly every one of us engages in some sort of effort to know the future every single day. We check our computers, phones, and papers for news of the stock market, and we'd love to know which stocks are going to go up . . . or down. We do a lot of checking on forecasts of upcoming weather; and interspersed with these more routine daily efforts at discerning the future are periodic announcements by self-proclaimed prophets of the impending end of the world.

We've seen that the Bible is no stranger to prophecy and prediction. J. Barton Payne's *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* catalogs literally thousands of biblical predictions and their fulfillment,<sup>9</sup> and Alfred Edersheim's *Life & Times of Jesus the Messiah* points out that the rabbis recognized 456 predictions related to the Messiah alone.<sup>10</sup>

Of the Bible's 31,124 verses, 8,352 (27%) contain predictive material of some sort. Some prophecies are unconditional, meaning that they will be fulfilled no matter what, while others are based on fulfillment of divinely-prescribed conditions. Examples of God-inspired prediction are not restricted to those books written by specifically-named prophets, and appear throughout the Bible.

The Bible's prophecies are frequently first given in very general terms, becoming more specific in the course of God's progressive revelation. For example, Genesis 3:15, the first hint of the coming Messiah, is a tiny bud that eventually becomes an extraordinary bouquet, and several of its most familiar flowers are found in Zechariah's prophetic "garden." I expect that you'll recognize them:

- **Zechariah 9:9**

<sup>9</sup> *Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

- **Zechariah 11:12-13**

<sup>12</sup> *I told them, "If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver. <sup>13</sup> And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the LORD.*

- **Zechariah 12:10**

<sup>10</sup> *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.*

- **Zechariah 13:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> *If someone asks, "What are these wounds on your body?" they will answer, "The wounds I was given at the house of my friends." <sup>7</sup> "Awake, sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!" declares the LORD Almighty. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones.*

- **Zechariah 13:1**

<sup>1</sup> *"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.*

<sup>9</sup> J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980).

<sup>10</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* in two volumes, eighth edition, revised (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1912), vol. 2, p. 710.

Those prophecies were spoken more than 500 years before their fulfillment, and they were given as signs so that the Messiah might be recognized when He came. Because the Messiah would be very different from what the people were expecting, God gave many indicators ahead of time that would be keys to the Messiah's identity.<sup>11</sup> The online version of this sermon will have a table that catalogues sixty-seven messianic prophecies with their fulfillments—fulfillments so statistically improbable that divine action was required for their completion. You may want to check that out this afternoon.<sup>12</sup>

### **Zechariah 9:9**

*<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

### **Zechariah 13:1**

*<sup>1</sup> "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity."<sup>13</sup>*

That part of Zechariah's prophecy became the inspiration for the hymn of promise that we now sing as testimony to God's faithfulness, forgiveness, and Hope:

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day; and there, may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood shall never lose its pow'r till all the ransomed church of God be saved, to sin no more.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> The traditional date for the completion of what we call the Old Testament is 450 B.C. We know that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, was completed c. 250 B.C., so the Hebrew text has to be at least that old, and parts of it are hundreds and hundreds of years older. This means that the minimum distance between these Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment was 250 years, with that distance being more commonly nearly 600 years, and in some cases 1,500 years or more.

The ancient Synagogue found references to the Messiah in many more passages of the Old Testament than those to which we generally appeal. Ancient Rabbinic writings unquestionably held that the Messiah would be pre-existent, would be elevated above Moses, and even above the angels, would represent the nation, would suffer and die a violent death for his people, would restore Israel and establish his Kingdom. But they had no real conception of sin as being so serious as to require blood redemption.

The Rabbis taught that religion was a matter of pleasing God by external works, overlooking the inner dimension of the motives of the heart. Judaism required only study of the Law and good works, and desired only national restoration and glory. Everything else was but means to these ends; the Messiah Himself only the grand instrument in attaining them. Thus viewed, the picture presented would be of Israel's exaltation rather than of the salvation of the world. In such a picture there was neither room nor occasion for a Messiah-Savior.

<sup>12</sup> You might also want to check out the film, *The Star of Bethlehem*, which unlocks the mystery of the world's most famous star. Acclaimed by NASA's former Chief of Planetary Astronomy and the Technical Editor for *Sky & Telescope* as "well-researched and reasonable," and described as "a compelling explanation" by NASA's Chief Engineer for the Space Shuttle and the International Space Station, this hour-long film uses the best of faith-full scholarship to illumine the spine-tingling wonder of the star that announced our Savior's birth. The film shows how the star not only fulfilled nine specific prophecies, but also how it had been engineered into the very fabric of creation. Neither Jesus' birth nor His death and resurrection were happenstance events! [www.bethlehemstar.net](http://www.bethlehemstar.net), [www.bethlehemstarmovie.com](http://www.bethlehemstarmovie.com)

<sup>13</sup> See also Matthew 5:3-12; John 10:27-28; Ephesians 1:16-23; Philippians 4:13.

<sup>14</sup> William Cowper (1731-1800), *There Is a Fountain*, tune is an early American melody.

# PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS & THEIR FULFILLMENT

Before we begin, you'd want to know that the traditional date for the completion of what we call the Old Testament is 450 B.C. We know that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, was completed c. 250 B.C., so the Hebrew text has to be at least that old, and parts of it are hundreds and hundreds of years older. This means that the minimum distance between these Messianic prophesies and their fulfillment was 250 years, with that distance being more commonly nearly 600 years, and in some cases 1,500 years or more. So put on your seat belt and let's launch into a survey of some of the more prominent predictions of the coming Savior.

	<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>"He" = "the Messiah"</b>	<b>Fulfillment</b>
1.	The Messiah will have a Human Mother	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 1:20; Galatians 4:4
2.	She will become pregnant while still a Virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18, 24-25; Luke 1:26-35
3.	He will be the Son of God	2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Psalm 2:7; Mark 3:11	Matthew 3:17, 16:16; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35, 22:70; John 1:34, 49; Acts 13:30-33
4.	Although He will be born in time, He existed before all time	Psalm 102:25; Proverbs 8:22-23; Isaiah 9:6-7, 41:4, 44:6, 48:12; Micah 5:2	John 1:1-2, 8:58, 17:5, 24; Colossians 1:17; Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13
5.	He will Be Called Lord	Psalm 110:1; Jeremiah 23:6	Luke 2:11, 20:41-44
6.	He will Be Immanuel ( <i>God with Us</i> )	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23; Luke 7:16
7.	He will be a Judge	Isaiah 33:22	John 5:30; 2 Timothy 4:1
8.	He will be a Prophet like Moses	Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19	Matthew 21:11; Luke 7:16; John 4:19, 6:14, 7:40
9.	He will be a Priest like Melchizedek	Psalm 110:4	Hebrews 3:1, 5:5-6, 6:20, 7:15-16, 10:21
10.	He will be a King	Psalm 2:6; Zechariah 9:9; Jeremiah 23:5	Matthew 21:5, 27:37; John 18:33-38
11.	He will be Descended from Abraham	Genesis 12:2-3, 18:18, 22:18 <sup>1</sup>	Matthew 1:1; Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:16
12.	He will be the Son of Isaac	Genesis 17:19, 21:12 <sup>2</sup>	Matthew 1:2; Luke 3:23, 34
13.	He will be the Son of Jacob	Numbers 24:17; Genesis 35:10-12 <sup>3</sup>	Matthew 1:2; Luke 1:33, 3:23, 34
14.	He will be from the Tribe of Judah	Genesis 49:10 <sup>4</sup> ; Micah 5:2	Matthew 1:2; Luke 3:23, 33; Hebrews 7:14

<sup>1</sup> This is the only time that God swears by Himself in His relationship with the patriarchs.

<sup>2</sup> Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. Now God eliminates one half of the descendants of Abraham.

<sup>3</sup> Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Now God eliminates one-half of the descendants of Isaac.

<sup>4</sup> Jacob had twelve sons and each became a tribe of the Hebrew nation. Now God eliminates eleven-twelfths of the descendants of Jacob.

15.	He will be Descended from Jesse	Isaiah 11:1, 10	Matthew 1:6; Luke 3:23, 32
16.	He will be from the House of David	2 Samuel 7:12 – 16; Psalm 132:11; Jeremiah 23:5 <sup>5</sup>	Matthew 1:1, 9:27; Mark 9:10, 10:47-48; Luke 3:23, 31, 18:38-39; Acts 13:22-23; Revelation 22:16
17.	He will be Heir to David's Throne	Isaiah 9:7	Matthew 1:1
18.	He will be Born at Bethlehem	Micah 5:2 <sup>6</sup>	Matthew 2:1-6, 4-8; Luke 2:4-7; John 7:42
19.	He will be Presented with Gifts	Psalm 72:10; Isaiah 60:6	Matthew 2:1, 11
20.	He will Flee into Egypt	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14
21.	A King will try to kill Him	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16
22.	He will be preceded by God's Messenger	Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1	Matthew 3:1-2, 3:3, 11:10; Luke 1:17; John 1:23
23.	He will begin His Ministry in Galilee	Isaiah 9:1	Matthew 4:12-13, 17
24.	He will have Extraordinary Spiritual Power	Psalm 45:7; Isaiah 11:2, 42:1, 61:1-2;	Matthew 3:16-17, 12:17-21; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 2:52, 4:15 -21, 43; John 1:32
25.	He will be passionate about God's Kingdom	Psalm 69:9	John 2:15-17
26.	He will do many Miracles	Isaiah 35:5-6a, 32:3-4	Matthew 9:32, 33, 35, 11:4-6; Mark 7:33-35; John 5:5-9, 9:6-11, 11:43, 44, 47
27.	He will teach using Parables	Psalm 78:2	Matthew 13:34
28.	He will Enter the Temple	Malachi 3:1	Matthew 21:12
29.	He will Enter Jerusalem in Triumph on a Donkey	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:35, 36-37a; John 12:12-16
30.	He will be a stumbling block to the Jews	Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14, 28:16 <sup>7</sup>	Romans 9:32-33; 1 Peter 2:7
31.	He will be a "Light" to the Gentiles	Isaiah 49:6, 60:3	Acts 13:47-48a, 26:23, 28:28
32.	He will be Betrayed by a Friend	Psalm 41:9, 55:12-14	Matthew 10:4, 26:14-16, 49-50; Mark 14:10; Luke 22:19-23; John 13:21
33.	He will be Rejected by His own People	Psalm 69:8, 118:22; Isaiah 53:1-3	Matthew 21:42-43, 26:3-4; John 1:11, 7:5, 48, 12:37-43; Acts 4:1-12
34.	He will be Hated without a Cause	Psalm 69:4; Isaiah 49:7	John 15:23-25
35.	He will be Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15, 27:3

<sup>5</sup> Jesse had *at least* eight sons (1 Samuel 16:10-11). Now God eliminates all of Jesse's sons except one, David.

<sup>6</sup> God now eliminates all the cities in the world, except one, for the birth of His Son.

<sup>7</sup> Remember, all of this was foretold at least 250 years ahead of time. Some of it goes all the way back to Genesis!

36.	The Betrayal Money will be Thrown in God's House	Zechariah 11:13b	Matthew 27:5a
37.	The Betrayal Money will Buy the Potter's Field	Zechariah 11:13b	Matthew 27:6-7
38.	His Disciples will abandon Him	Zechariah 13:7	Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27, 50
39.	He will be Tried & Condemned	Isaiah 53:8	Matthew 27:1-2; Luke 23:1-25
40.	He will be accused by lying Witnesses	Psalms 27:12, 35:11	Matthew 26:59-61
41.	He will say nothing in court in His own defense	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 26:62-63, 27:12-19; Mark 15:3-4; Luke 25:8-10
42.	He will be Wounded and Bruised	Isaiah 53:5; Zechariah 13:6	Matthew 27:26
43.	He will be Beaten and Spit on	Isaiah 50:6; Micah 5:1	Matthew 26:67, 27:30; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63
44.	He will be Mocked & Insulted	Psalms 22:6-8	Matthew 27:31, 39-44; Luke 23:11, 35
45.	He will Die as a Sacrifice for Sin	Isaiah 53:5-12	John 1:29, 11:49-52; Acts 10:43, 13:38-39; Hebrews 1:3, 2:14-15, 9:27-28, 10:12, 18
46.	He will Die by Crucifixion	Psalms 22:14-17	Matthew 27:31; Mark 15:20, 25
47.	He will collapse as He carries His Cross	Psalms 109:24-25	Matthew 27:31-32; Luke 23:26; John 19:17
48.	His Hands and Feet will be Pierced	Psalms 22:16; Zechariah 12:10	Luke 23:33; John 20:25, 27
49.	He will be Crucified with Thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27-28
50.	He will Pray for those who kill Him	Isaiah 53:12, Psalm 109:4	Luke 23:32-34
51.	His Friends will watch His Death at a Distance	Psalms 38:11	Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49
52.	People will shake their heads at what happens to Him	Psalms 22:7, 109:25	Matthew 27:39
53.	People will stare at Him as He Dies	Psalms 22:17	Luke 23:35
54.	Soldiers will gamble for His Clothes	Psalms 22:18	Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; John 19:23-24
55.	He will be thirsty as He dies	Psalms 22:15; 69:21	John 19:28
56.	Sour Wine (Gall) and Vinegar will be Offered to Him to Drink	Psalms 69:21	Matthew 27:34; John 19:28-30
57.	He will Cry Out in abandonment as He dies	Psalms 22:1	Matthew 27:46
58.	He will commit Himself to God as He dies	Psalms 31:5	Luke 23:46
59.	His Bones will not be Broken	Exodus 12:46; Psalms 34:20	John 19:31-36

60.	But His Heart will be Broken	Psalm 22:14	John 19:34
61.	His Side will be Pierced	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
62.	Unnatural Darkness will cover the land as He dies	Amos 8:9	Matthew 27:45
63.	He will be Buried in a Rich Man's Tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
64.	Judas will be Replaced Among the 12	Psalm 109:7-8	Acts 1:18-20
65.	He will Rise from the Dead	Psalm 16:10, 30:3, 41:10, 118:17; Hosea 6:2	Matthew 28:6-10; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:46; Acts 2:22-32, 13:33
66.	He will Ascend back to Heaven	Psalm 8:3, 68:18a	Acts 1:9, 18-20
67.	Where He will be Seated at God's Right Hand	Psalm 110:1	Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:3
68.	Until He Comes Again!	Matthew 24:26-27, 25:31	Luke 21:28; Romans 13:11 Stay Tuned . . . .

“We find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled [even] eight prophecies is 1 in  $10^{17}$ .” That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing “we take  $10^{17}$  silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.”

Stoner considers 48 prophecies and says, “we find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in  $10^{157}$ . This is really a large number and it represents an extremely small chance. Let us try to visualize it. The silver dollar, which we have been using, is entirely too large. We must select a smaller object. The electron is about as small an object as we know of. It is so small that it will take 2.5 times  $10^{15}$  of them laid side by side to make a line, single file, one inch long. If we were going to count the electrons in this line one inch long, and counted 250 each minute, and if we counted day and night, it would take us 19,000,000 years to count just the one-inch line of electrons. If we had a cubic inch of these electrons and we tried to count them it would take us, counting steadily 250 each minute, 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 years or 6.9 times  $10^{21}$  years.

“With this introduction, let us go back to our chance of 1 in  $10^{157}$ . Let us suppose that we are taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What a chance has he of finding the right one? What kind of pile will this number of electrons make? They make an inconceivably large volume.”<sup>8</sup>

*Such is the chance of any one man fulfilling 48 prophecies, much less 67!*

*How will you respond to this Promised One? Will you make Jesus LORD of your life?*

---

<sup>8</sup> Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 109.