

Slides 1-4: hymn: "The Solid Rock", slide 5: memory verse

On the day of Jesus' resurrection, we read of a most interesting incident on the road to Emmaus recorded in Luke chapter 24. Jesus met two of His disciples walking along the road who were deep in discussion and didn't recognize Him as He joined up with them. They were commiserating as to how the death of the one they thought was the Messiah could possibly happen and then they wondered about the rumors they'd heard that Jesus was alive! Jesus began to explain to them how His suffering and death was foretold in the Scriptures. He chided them: "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then, Luke writes, "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself."

Once the disciples understood the message of the Scriptures, there was no stopping them from spreading the news that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Within days, the disciples began quoting passages from Scripture and declaring those prophecies that had been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Their enthusiasm was contagious; Peter vigorously explained the reality of Christ's coming; Stephen gave a great speech to the Sanhedrin shortly before being stoned to death; and Philip was teaching from Isaiah's prophecies. A few years later we find Paul reasoning with the Jews in synagogues that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, and Apollos refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ" (*Acts 18:28*). Many of the Jews began to understand their own Scriptures for the first time in the light of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, but unfortunately, many others would not accept the message despite the clear evidence from the Scriptures and the first hand witness accounts.

To accurately foretell these events hundreds of years in advance is no coincidence; it required divine knowledge and power to bring them to pass as foretold. We were reminded last week that God did not make it up as He went along. Nothing has been or will be left to chance. One or two fulfillments in Jesus' life could be dismissed as coincidental. But when the instances of fulfilled prophecies are counted up, probability becomes certainty. And therein lays the proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Slide 6 From our vantage point, 2000 years after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, the evidence looks pretty convincing. New Testament writers cite messianic prophecies from the Old Testament more than 60 times. In addition, the Old Testament contains more than 300 prophetic passages that describe who Jesus is and what He will do. With all their knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, the Israelites should have been able to recognize the true Messiah when He came, but unfortunately, the Messiah who came was far different than the one they wanted. They were hoping for a great King, a conquering warrior, one who would command the respect of His enemies and overthrow Roman rule. That picture of Messiah is also vividly painted in the Old Testament Scriptures that we will look at next week. But what the Jews did not understand was that the Messiah would come twice; the first time, sort of sneaking in to the world quietly, living a rather insignificant life of only 33 years, and then dying a shameful death on the cross to pay the ultimate price for our sins. That was the Messiah that they could not accept.

As we look into these prophecies over the next several weeks, we will begin to see God's plan unfold in history. The apostle John told us in the first chapter of his Gospel that 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and

the Word was God, and that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.' Tonight, let's look more closely at some of the prophecies and references which previewed Jesus earthly life and were fulfilled while He dwelt among us.

Slide 7 Genealogy

Although Jesus is clearly involved in the creation events, we see the first reference to Messiah is in Genesis 3:15 when God prophesied to the serpent Satan, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel". The implication was that Eve's descendant would undo the damage that Satan had caused in the garden. The Messiah would be the 'seed of a woman' who comes to destroy the work of the Devil. The "seed of the woman" is an allusion to a future descendant of Eve who would have no human father. Biologically, a woman produces no seed and, except in this case, the Bible always speaks only of the seed of men. This promised Seed would, therefore, have to be miraculously implanted in the womb. In this way, He would not inherit the sin nature that would disqualify every man on the earth since Adam from becoming a Savior from sin. From the very beginning then, this prophecy anticipates the future uniqueness of the birth of Christ. Satan inflicted a painful wound on the woman's Seed, that is Jesus, when He died on the cross, but Christ will in turn crush Satan's head in the end, as we shall see in our future studies.

The implications of this prophecy are profound and resulted in the careful recording of genealogies with the specific intention of verifying who this savior would be. The genealogies were first recorded by unknown scribes before and after the flood until Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Old Testament during the

desert wanderings. Later, these genealogies were maintained by Levite priests who kept temple records even throughout the exile and all the way to the time of Jesus' birth.

In Genesis 9, we read that the Messiah would be a descendant of Noah's son, Shem, the ancestor of Eber the founder of the Hebrew race. That would distinguish Him from Asian or African descent. In Genesis 22, the promise is made to Shem's descendant, Abraham, "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." That would distinguish Him from all other Middle Eastern rulers of the era. Later, we read that the Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham's son, Isaac, not Ishmael, in order to distinguish him from the Arab nation.

And later, we see that Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac's son, Jacob, not Esau, which would distinguish him from the Edomite race, who will have no survivors, according to Obadiah 1:18. (You may recall that King Herod was an Edomite.)

Then we're told in Genesis 49:10 that He would be a descendant of Judah, a line which included Tamar, a woman of questionable behavior, Rahab a harlot and Ruth, from the land of Moab. These details indicated that Jesus' human lineage was not one of unrealistic perfection. Several hundred years later the prophet Isaiah revealed that the Messiah was to come through the line of Jesse, the father of King David, whose royal lineage through 30 more generations led to Joseph, the husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

When we observe the careful attention given to the recording of that family line, even through times of challenges, moral failure, conquest and exile, we have to marvel that the hand of God was clearly limiting the number of people who

could have fulfilled that messianic lineage. Both Matthew and Luke were careful to search the Scriptures and record the genealogy of Jesus to show that from the beginning, Jesus is the Son of God as well as the son of man.

Slide 8 Next we see that the Messiah would be a **great prophet**.

Moses, the greatest of all Hebrew prophets wrote in Deuteronomy 18:15, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers.” Moses himself was a prophecy of the Messiah. Let’s look at how Moses was a pre-figuration of Jesus:

As infants, both their lives were threatened by the decrees of evil kings, and both were supernaturally protected from harm. Both spent time during their early years in Egypt. Both were initially doubted in their roles by their siblings. Both Moses and Jesus performed many miracles validating their message. Both taught new truths from God, confronted demonic powers, cured lepers, acted as intermediaries between God and man, were teachers, lawgivers, and both delivered God’s people.

During His earthly ministry, many regarded Jesus as a prophet. The Samaritan woman at the well was one of the first to address Him as such. “I can see that you are a prophet”, she said after Jesus reminded her that she had five husbands. (*John 4: 19*) Later, after He had miraculously multiplied fish and bread to feed the 5,000, people began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” (*John 6:14*) Israel had many prophets, and all claimed to speak the word of God, but none claimed to be the Messiah, except Jesus. He first declared Himself first to a Samaritan woman at the well. When she said, “I know the Messiah is coming and He will explain everything to us,” His reply was, “I who speak to you am He.” (*John 4:26*)

Slide 9 Born of a Virgin

Isaiah 7:14, called "the Immanuel prophecy," foretells the unique birth of Jesus by a virgin: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." At the time, Isaiah didn't understand that this prophecy pointed ahead hundreds of years to Jesus, and some even speculated that the prophecy referred to his own family, and yet he obediently wrote the words which would one day fulfill the prophecy in Genesis regarding the unique incarnation of the Messiah.

Before Jesus was born, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him that his betrothed, Mary, was expecting a child—conceived not by man, but by the Spirit of God. The amazing thing about this is that she agreed to be that vessel, enduring ridicule and insults to her character for her entire life. So when she said to the angel, "be it done unto me according to your word," the most profound and intimate moment in the history of the universe occurred when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and placed the very seed of God inside her untouched womb. Who would have ever believed such a miracle occurred? Only a chosen few knew the truth; Mary's cousin Elizabeth, her fiancé Joseph, and later Luke who would write the Gospel story, after hearing it, most likely, from the mouth of Mary herself.

Slide 10 Birthplace in Bethlehem of Judea

The Jews of Jesus' day knew that the Messiah was to come from Bethlehem ever since the prophecy in Micah 5:2 was revealed over 600 years before the event: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." Micah's prophecy was precise to distinguish which of

two Bethlehems would be the birthplace of Jesus since only one was in Judea. The fulfillment of that promise took place when Caesar Augustus proclaimed a census that required Joseph, along with Mary, to travel to the city of David called Bethlehem, in order to register for his taxes. While they were there, Jesus was born in the very town proclaimed to Micah many years before. Who but God could have orchestrated that situation?

This prophecy was well-known enough that even the Magi from Persia, hundreds of miles and years away, were anticipating that the King of the Jews would be born in Bethlehem. The Persians learned of the prophecies from the Jews, who had been exiled in their land after the Babylonian conquest almost 600 years earlier. After many years of waiting for the event, they loaded up their caravan and traveled hundreds of miles just to come and worship Him when they saw His star in the east.

Arrival time, 483 years after decree to rebuild the temple

In the book of Daniel, which we will study more closely in a few weeks, it is written that the Anointed One will come at a specific time of seven ‘sevens’ and 62 ‘sevens’, after the decree of the King of Persia to release the Jews from exile to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. This has been translated to indicating a period of 483 years. Most Jews were familiar with Daniel's prophecy and knew that the time for the Messiah to appear had elapsed. One commentary stated that ‘Messianic fervor was at an all-time high’ and many were on the lookout for Him as they realized that the fulfillment of this prophecy was near at hand.

One of those on the lookout was the old man Simeon who rejoiced when the babe was presented in the temple. And Anna the prophetess gave thanks when she recognized the baby and proclaimed that the redemption of Israel was at hand. (*Luke 2:25-38*) Many years later, the Samaritan woman at the well said, “I know that the Messiah is coming....” (*John 4: 25*) If the Messiah was to come, He would have arrived on the scene just when Jesus did.

Slide 11 Rejected by His people

You read this week how Jesus validated the start of His ministry to the religious congregation in an amazing incident recorded in the 4th chapter of Luke. He came to preach in His hometown of Nazareth, shortly after the beginning of His public ministry. The Book of Isaiah recorded over 100 references that applied to the Messiah, but the one that Jesus chose to identify Himself was from Isaiah chapter 61:

“The ‘Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

When He told His rapt audience that He was the fulfillment of that Scripture, one would have thought that great joy would have erupted, after all, here was the nation who had been anticipating His coming for centuries. Instead, they attempted to drive Him over a cliff! As the Scriptures foretold, He was despised and rejected by His own people, and an alien to His family. And we when we think of how Jesus was rejected by His own, we can’t overlook the descriptive passages in Isaiah 53:

Verse 2: nothing in His appearance made Him stand out as desirable, Verse 3: familiar with suffering, verse 4: stricken by God, verse 5: pierced for our transgressions, verse 6: the Lord laid on Him our iniquities, led like a lamb to the slaughter, assigned a grave with the wicked, numbered with the transgressors, bore the sin of many and made intercession for his transgressors...all these passages a picture of the one who knew no sin, and yet became sin on our behalf.

Which leads us to the most visual picture of all of prophecy, the sacrificial system and the slain Lamb of God. We learned last year in our study of Exodus that the sacrificial system instituted in ancient Israel called for the blood sacrifice of bulls, heifers, sheep and goats to pay for the sins of the people. Each ritual was carefully prescribed and faithfully executed for hundreds of years and pictured in a very graphic way the future sacrificial death of humanity's Savior. In this sense the sacrificial system itself was the prophetic symbol of the Messiah, because only the shed blood of the Creator Himself could atone for the sins of other human being. At the first Passover, described in Exodus 12, God instructed the Israelites to kill a lamb a perfect lamb without blemish, and to put its blood on their door-posts. When the angel of death passed through Egypt where the Israelites were being held as slaves, it would pass by any house that had the blood of the Passover lamb on its door-posts. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the perfect Passover Lamb because it is through His blood that we are saved from, or passed over by, death.

Virtually every aspect of Jesus' suffering and death was spelled out in considerable detail centuries before it actually happened including the precise timing of Jesus' crucifixion. It was revealed to the prophet Daniel that the Messiah would be revealed to Israel, but He would then "be cut off," referring to the crucifixion when Jesus died, or was cut off, for the sins of the world. 483 years

later to the day, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and revealed Himself as Israel's Messiah. Only days later, Jesus was arrested, tried and executed on the day the Passover lambs were slain and He died shortly after 3:00 p.m. on Passover day. He truly was "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" as spoken of by John the Baptist (*John 1:29*).

But most of Israel missed this prophetic picture, and only *after* the fact did the disciples understand that Jesus' death fulfilled whole sections of Scripture, such as in Psalm 22, that you studied this week, and others in

Psalm 34: 20, "He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken",

Psalm 41:9: He will be betrayed by a friend,

Psalm 69: 21: He would be offered vinegar and gall,

Zechariah 12:10: "They will look on Me whom they pierced."

Slide 12 Yet in spite of so much specific, eyewitness testimony, some people still write books and articles which deny the truth of Christ as the Savior of the world. A common objection raised is that Jesus and His followers manipulated events to make it look like He fulfilled the prophecies. There is no doubt that Jesus did take some steps to directly fulfill prophecy, such as securing the donkey on which to ride into Jerusalem, or speaking forth previously recorded words on the cross.

God explained in the Old Testament that He is able to foretell the future: "I am God... declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done... Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass" (*Isaiah 46:9-11*). Christ, as God made flesh, was simply bringing to pass what He had foretold. But Jesus did not, and would not control what others did. Jesus did not manipulate

Judas to betray Him, did not cause His disciples to flee in fear when He was arrested, or incite people to hurl their insults, or pierce His hands and feet. In addition, He would have had to successfully manipulate His own birthplace and His human lineage, as well as arrange for His death all according to the time frame of the prophecy of Daniel 9! If He wanted to manipulate anything, He *should* have been to make Himself look unquestioningly strong rather than weak, rich rather than poor, popular rather than despised.

If Jesus had wanted to become a physical king and leader of the Jewish nation, He had many opportunities to do so, beginning with Satan's temptations after His 40 day fast. Many were willing to follow Him and make Him king, but instead He became a servant and was willing to give His life as payment for the sins of all. No, even though He is the Son of God, Jesus was obedient to the Father in everything He did, even unto a painful, shameful death. But it was because of His obedience in enduring the shame of the Cross, that He was raised triumphantly on the third day, just as He said, and now sits in authority with the Father in heaven until He comes again.

And the most exciting part is that we have been given His authority to bind and loose, to forgive one another, and to love one another with the same unconditional love that Christ has shown us. Jesus did not have to manipulate anything about His earthly life to accomplish complete and total victory except to submit to the will of the Father, and He will not have to manipulate any events in the future in order to reign victoriously as the end times continue to be revealed.

Carol entitled this lesson, "Prophecy gives us hope, not optimism."

Optimism is based on circumstances, reliance on other people, confidence in ourselves and our abilities, all of which can crumble in an instant and make us lose heart. But after seeing how faithful God has been to bring about everything in His Word regarding the first coming of Jesus as Messiah, we can count in Him to fulfill everything He has promised regarding the second coming. Because our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus and His righteousness, His prophetic Word, His oath, His covenant, His blood, then even when all around gives way, He is indeed the solid Rock on which we stand.

Pray.....