

# The Case for Christianity

## Lesson 5 – Did the Life Jesus Lived Fit the Prophetic Profile of the Messiah?

*"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill."* – Jesus - **Mathew 5: 17**

*"And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures."* – **Luke 24: 27**

*"Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'" – Jesus - Luke 24:44*

*"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life."* – Jesus – **John 5: 39-40**

*"And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ'" – Apostle Paul - Acts 17:2,3*

The apostles throughout the New Testament appealed to two areas of the life of Jesus of Nazareth to establish His Messiahship. One was the resurrection and the other was fulfilled messianic prophecy. The Old Testament, written over a 1,000-year period, contains several hundred references to the coming Messiah. All of these were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and they establish a solid confirmation of His credentials as the Messiah.

### Prophecies of Jesus Fulfilled

#### 44 Prophecies Jesus Christ Fulfilled

Although this list is not exhaustive, you'll find 44 messianic predictions clearly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, along with supporting references from the Old and New Testament.

<u>Prophecies About Jesus</u>	<u>Old Testament Scripture</u>	<u>New Testament Fulfillment</u>
1 Messiah would be born of a woman.	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 1:20 / Galatians 4:4
2 Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1 / Luke 2:4-6
3 Messiah would be born of a virgin.	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22-23 / Luke 1:26-31
4 Messiah would come from the line of Abraham.	Genesis 12:3 / Genesis 22:18	Matthew 1:1 / Romans 9:5
5 Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac.	Genesis 17:19 / Genesis 21:12	Luke 3:34
6 Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob.	Numbers 24:17	Matthew 1:2
7 Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.	Genesis 49:10	Luke 3:33 / Hebrews 7:14
8 Messiah would be heir to King David's throne.	2 Samuel 7:12-13 / Isaiah 9:7	Luke 1:32-33 / Romans 1:3
9 Messiah's throne will be anointed and eternal.	Psalms 45:6-7 / Daniel 2:44	Luke 1:33 / Hebrews 1:8-12
10 Messiah would be called Immanuel.	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
11 Messiah would spend a season in Egypt.	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14-15
12 Children massacred at Messiah's birthplace.	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16-18

13 A messenger would prepare the way for Messiah.	Isaiah 40:3-5	Luke 3:3-6
14 Messiah would be rejected by his own people.	Psalms 69:8 / Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11 / John 7:5
15 Messiah would be a prophet.	Deuteronomy 18:15	Acts 3:20-22
16 Messiah would be preceded by Elijah.	Malachi 4:5-6	Matthew 11:13-14
17 Messiah would be declared the Son of God.	Psalms 2:7	Matthew 3:16-17
18 Messiah would be called a Nazarene.	Isaiah 11:1	Matthew 2:23
19 Messiah would bring light to Galilee.	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 4:13-16
20 Messiah would speak in parables.	Psalms 78:2-4 / Isaiah 6:9-10	Matthew 13:10-15, 34-35
21 Messiah would be sent to heal the brokenhearted.	Isaiah 61:1-2	Luke 4:18-19
22 Messiah will be priest after the order of Melchizedek.	Psalms 110:4	Hebrews 5:5-6
23 Messiah would be called King.	Psalms 2:6 / Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 27:37 / Mark 11:7-11
24 Messiah would be praised by little children.	Psalms 8:2	Matthew 21:16
25 Messiah would be betrayed.	Psalms 41:9 / Zechariah 11:12-13	Luke 22:47-48 / Matthew 26:14-16
26 Betrayal money used to buy a potter's field.	Zechariah 11:12-13	Matthew 27:9-10
27 Messiah would be falsely accused.	Psalms 35:11	Mark 14:57-58
28 Messiah would be silent before his accusers.	Isaiah 53:7	Mark 15:4-5
29 Messiah would be spat upon and struck.	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67
30 Messiah would be hated without cause.	Psalms 35:19 / Psalms 69:4	John 15:24-25
31 Messiah would be crucified with criminals.	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38 / Mark 15:27-28
32 Messiah would be given vinegar to drink.	Psalms 69:21	Matthew 27:34 / John 19:28-30
33 Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.	Psalms 22:16 / Zechariah 12:10	John 20:25-27
34 Messiah would be mocked and ridiculed.	Psalms 22:7-8	Luke 23:35
35 Soldiers would gamble for Messiah's garments.	Psalms 22:18	Luke 23:34 / Matthew 27:35-36
36 Messiah's bones would not be broken.	Exodus 12:46 / Psalms 34:20	John 19:33-36
37 Messiah would be forsaken by God.	Psalms 22:1	Matthew 27:46
38 Messiah would pray for his enemies.	Psalms 109:4	Luke 23:34
39 Soldiers would pierce Messiah's side.	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
40 Messiah would be buried with the rich.	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
41 Messiah would resurrect from the dead.	Psalms 16:10 / Psalms 49:15	Matthew 28:2-7 / Acts 2:22-32
42 Messiah would ascend to heaven.	Psalms 24:7-10	Mark 16:19 / Luke 24:51
43 Messiah would be seated at God's right hand.	Psalms 68:18 / Psalms 110:1	Mark 16:19 / Matthew 22:44
44 Messiah would be a sacrifice for sin.	Isaiah 53:5-12	Romans 5:6-8

Let's focus on prophecies that Jesus seems to have considered to be some of the most important in Jewish Scripture. When we turn to the Gospels, we find Jesus repeatedly refers to himself and his mission in terms of several prophecies from the book of Daniel (see Daniel 2, 7, 9). As we will see, these passages in Daniel give us the first clues that the Messiah would be not just the long-awaited king, but a divine being who would usher in a heavenly kingdom.

## The Kingdom of God

In the Gospels, Jesus often talked about the coming of "the kingdom of God"— or, in Matthew's Gospel, "the kingdom of heaven." For example, let's look at the very beginning of his public ministry:

**Mark 1: 14-15 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Along similar lines, throughout the Gospels, Jesus speaks over and over again about the coming of the kingdom of God and the importance of entering into the kingdom so as to have eternal life.

**Matthew 10: 5-7 (ESV)** <sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand. '

**Luke 11: 20 (ESV)** <sup>20</sup> But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

**John 3: 3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

What does Jesus mean when he refers to "the kingdom of God"? And what does he mean when he says that it is "at hand"? He seems to assume that his Jewish audience will understand what he's talking about. Specifically, what does he mean when he speaks about "the time" being fulfilled in Mark 1: 15?

### King Nebuchadnezzar's Dream – The Great Image

The key to unlocking the meaning of Jesus's otherwise mysterious words can be found by going back to the Old Testament. Although the exact expression "kingdom of God" almost never occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures, there is one prominent passage in the Jewish Bible that speaks about the future coming of the kingdom of God: the book of Daniel's famous prophecy of the four pagan kingdoms that are destroyed by the "kingdom of the God of heaven" (Daniel 2: 44).

Daniel 2: 44 (ESV) <sup>44</sup> And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever,

So when Jesus talks about the coming of "the kingdom of God," he is alluding first and foremost to the fulfillment of this famous prophecy from Daniel. Although this prophecy may be unfamiliar to modern-day readers, it was very popular among first-century Jews, because it gave them a timeline for when God would establish his kingdom on earth.



According to the book of Daniel, in the sixth century BC, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a dream of a great "image" or statue made out of four precious metals. In the dream, the image is destroyed by a mysterious stone that grows into a great mountain and fills all the earth:

Daniel 2:31-35 (ESV) <sup>31</sup> "You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. <sup>32</sup> The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup> its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. <sup>34</sup> As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. <sup>35</sup> Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

According to the most ancient Jewish interpretations we possess, in the first century AD, the four pagan kingdoms described by the book of Daniel were interpreted as the four empires that had reigned over the Jewish people since the time of King Nebuchadnezzar:

## The Prophecy of the Kingdom of God (Daniel 2)

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream	Daniel's Interpretation	Five Empires	Dates
1) Gold Head	1 <sup>st</sup> Kingdom	Babylonian	6 <sup>th</sup> Century BC
2) Silver Chest and Arms	2 <sup>nd</sup> Kingdom	Medo-Persian	5 <sup>th</sup> Century BC
3) Bronze Belly and Thighs	3 <sup>rd</sup> Kingdom	Greek	4 <sup>th</sup> Century BC
4) Iron / Clay Legs and Feet	4 <sup>th</sup> Kingdom	Roman	1 <sup>st</sup> Century BC
5) Stone Turning to Mountain	5 <sup>th</sup> Kingdom	Kingdom of God	1 <sup>st</sup> Century AD?

The reason this ancient Jewish interpretation is important for us is that for many first-century Jews who were following the prophecy of Daniel, the fifth kingdom— the kingdom of God— was expected to come during the time of the Roman Empire. That's what Daniel says: "in the days" of the fourth kingdom, "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2: 44).

Notice also that while the kingdom of God will start out seemingly small and powerless— like a little stone— it will somehow miraculously overthrow the Roman Empire. Then, from the very foot of the "statue" of the fourth kingdom, the kingdom of God will spread throughout the world until the little stone becomes a "great mountain"— that is, a worldwide kingdom.

This is the kingdom Jesus has come to announce. This is the kingdom Jesus is talking about when he declares, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1: 15). Notice however, that the kingdom in Daniel is not a man-made kingdom; it is represented as a stone "cut out by no human hand" — that is, a supernatural kingdom made by God himself. And this is the context in which everything Jesus says about himself needs to be understood.

### Daniel's Vision – The Son of Man

But the prophecy of the coming of the kingdom of God isn't the only oracle from the book of Daniel that is essential for understanding Jesus. For if the "kingdom of God" was one of Jesus's favorite ways of referring to the coming age of salvation, the expression "the Son of Man" was one of his favorite ways of referring to himself.

**Matthew 11: 18-19 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

**Luke 9: 57-58 (ESV)** <sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

**Mark 14: 21 (ESV)** <sup>21</sup> For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

What does Jesus mean when he refers to himself as "the Son of Man"? Why does he speak about himself in the third person in this way? When Jesus uses the expression, he does so in such a way that he seems to be referring to a specific person: literally, "**the** Son of Man". As with the expression "kingdom of God," Jesus once again seems to assume that his original Jewish audience will understand what he's talking about.

Once again, the answer seems to lie in the Old Testament. As scholars widely agree, when Jesus speaks about "the Son of Man," he is referring to another prophecy from the book of Daniel: the famous vision of the four beasts and the coming of "one like a son of man" (Daniel 7). In this passage, Daniel has a dream about a sequence of four pagan empires that will be followed by the coming of the kingdom of God. In this case, the four empires are not described as four kinds of metal, but as four kinds of "beasts":

**Daniel 7: 2-7 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> Daniel declared, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. <sup>3</sup> And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. <sup>4</sup> The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. <sup>5</sup> And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' <sup>6</sup> After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. <sup>7</sup> After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.



The four beasts of Daniel's dream also symbolize a sequence of four pagan empires, beginning with the Babylonian Empire. In this case, the book of Daniel makes clear that "these four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth" (Daniel 7: 17).

The reason Daniel's vision is important for understanding who Jesus claimed to be is that the vision doesn't end with the coming of the fourth beast; it ends with the victorious coming of a heavenly "Son of Man":

**Daniel 7: 9 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire.

Continuing on in verse 13...

**Daniel 7: 13-14 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. <sup>14</sup> And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

### The Prophecy of the Son of Man (Daniel 7)

Daniel's Dream	Angel Interpretation	Five Empires	Dates
1) Lion	1 <sup>st</sup> King	Babylonian	6 <sup>th</sup> Century BC
2) Bear	2 <sup>nd</sup> King	Medo-Persian	5 <sup>th</sup> Century BC
3) Leopard	3 <sup>rd</sup> King	Greek	4 <sup>th</sup> Century BC
4) Fourth Beast	4 <sup>th</sup> King	Roman	1 <sup>st</sup> Century BC
5) Son of Man	5 <sup>th</sup> King	Kingdom of God	1 <sup>st</sup> Century AD?

Once again, the implications of this prophecy are enormous, for it makes clear that the long-awaited kingdom of God and the heavenly "son of man" — who will reign over the kingdom of God — will come sometime during the reign of the Roman Empire.

It wouldn't take much for a first-century Jew to realize that if the "son of man" in Daniel will be the ruler of the kingdom of God, then he must also be the long-awaited Messiah. Indeed, the fact that the son of man is a king is made clear not only by his being contrasted with the pagan kings (the "beasts"), but also by the fact that he is seated on a heavenly "throne" (Daniel 7: 9-14).

When Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God was at hand and referred to himself as the Son of Man, he was saying, in effect: "The time for the fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel is at hand. The time for the coming of the Messiah is now." Every Jew in Jesus's audience who knew the book of Daniel would have known he might be right. For, as we have seen previously, the long-awaited kingdom of God and the messianic Son of Man were supposed to come during the time of the Roman Empire. And that, of course, is precisely when Jesus began his public ministry: during "the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (Luke 3: 1).

## The Death of the Messiah

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks about eventually being handed over to the authorities and being put to death. When he predicts that he will suffer and die, he repeatedly refers to himself as "the Son of Man."

For example, in the Gospel of Mark, after Peter confesses Jesus to be the Messiah, this is what he says...

**Mark 8: 31-32 (ESV)** <sup>31</sup> *And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.* <sup>32</sup> *And he said this plainly...*



When Jesus speaks about his own future suffering and death, he alludes once again to the book of Daniel. It is as the messianic Son of Man spoken of by Daniel that he must suffer and die. In fact, the word "must" here indicates that Jesus is referring to the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. But, why does Jesus say that the Son of Man must suffer and die? What passage in the Bible is he talking about?

Once again, the answer lies in the book of Daniel. Although the "son of man" in Daniel 7 is not described as being put to death, the future "messiah" in Daniel 9 is described as being put to death. In fact, this is the only explicit prophecy of the death of the "messiah" in the Old Testament. Although the passage is somewhat obscure, it is worth reading carefully:

**Daniel 9: 24-27 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> *"Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.* <sup>25</sup> *Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time.* <sup>26</sup> *And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.* <sup>27</sup> *And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."*

This is a very difficult passage and one we won't try to fully explore it. However, we want to highlight three reasons it has been interpreted since ancient times as telling not only that the Messiah would come, but when the Messiah would come.

First, the prophecy declares that there will be 490 years ("seventy weeks of years") between the restoration of the city of Jerusalem and the coming of a "messiah". In other words, this passage gives a remarkably specific timeline

for the arrival of a future king of Israel. Because kings were “anointed” with oil, they were sometimes referred to as “messiahs” (see 1 Samuel 24: 6; Psalm 2: 2).

Second, and equally important, the prophecy also declares that this future Messiah will be “cut off” — a common Hebrew expression for being put to death. This is why Jesus appears to derive the idea that the Son of Man must be put to death. Jesus is treating the Son of Man in Daniel 7 and the Messiah in Daniel 9 as if they were the same person: the first prophecy describes the heavenly enthronement of the Messiah; the second describes the earthly suffering and death of the Messiah.

Third, the prophecy links the death of the future Messiah to the destruction of the “city” of Jerusalem and the Temple “sanctuary,” resulting in the end of sacrifice and a mysterious “abomination” that “makes desolate” (Daniel 9: 27). Significantly, Jesus elsewhere explicitly refers to this passage from Daniel when he warns the disciples about the coming of the “abomination of desolation” and the destruction of Jerusalem.

**Matthew 24: 15 (ESV)** <sup>15</sup> *“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)..*

**Mark 13: 14 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> *“But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*

According to the book of Daniel, the Messiah will not just come in glory; he will also suffer and die. Perhaps even more striking, Daniel gives a timeline for the coming of the Messiah: he will come some 490 years after the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by the Babylonian Empire (ca. 587 BC). but which King Artaxerxes of Persia, in the “seventh year” of his reign (ca. 457 BC), had ordered to be rebuilt under the leadership of Ezra the Jewish priest (see Ezra 7: 1-28).

### The Prophecy of the Messiah’s Death (Daniel 9)

Daniel’s Prophecy	Historical Events	Dates
“Going forth of the word to Restore and build Jerusalem”	Decree to rebuild the Temple by King Artaxerxes of Persia	ca.457 BC
“Seventy weeks of years”	70 X 7 years = 490 years	457 BC – AD 33
“Messiah will be cut off”	Jesus is crucified	ca. AD 33
“City and sanctuary will be destroyed”	Temple and Jerusalem destroyed by Romans	AD 70

If you have never explored Daniel’s prophecies of the Messiah in great detail, you may be shocked at what we have covered. However, when it comes to Daniel’s prophetic timeline for the coming of the Messiah, these ideas have been around for a long, long time.



Listen to the words of the first-century Jewish historian Josephus:

*"We are convinced... that Daniel spoke with God, for he did not only prophesy future events, as did the other prophets, but he also determined the time at which these would come to pass."* (Josephus, Antiquities, 10.267– 68),



Also, the fourth-century Church historian Eusebius:

*"We must count the numbers, that is to say the seventy weeks, which are 490 years, from the going forth of the word of answer and from the building of Jerusalem. This took place in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, King of Persia. For Nehemiah his cup-bearer made the request, and received the answer that Jerusalem should be rebuilt, and the order went forth to carry it out.... And from that date to the coming of Christ is seventy weeks."* (Eusebius, The Proof of the Gospel, 8.2.389)



And, the famous seventeenth-century French mathematician Blaise Pascal:

*"One must be bold to predict the same thing in so many ways. It was necessary that the four idolatrous or pagan monarchies, the end of the kingdom of Judah, and the seventy weeks, should happen at the same time, and all this before the second temple was destroyed."* (Pascal, Pensées, 11.709)

In short, however one calculates the exact dates spoken of by Daniel, the 490 years between the restoration of Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah are undeniably completed before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. In other words, Daniel's prophecy clearly points to a fulfillment of the arrival of the Messiah in the first century!