

Jesus is in the Old Testament? – Lesson 1

Did you know that there are over 300 Old Testament Scriptures that contain prophecies of the coming Messiah? Some are small references contained within a single verse while others are entire chapters. In this lesson, we're going to look at just some of the Scriptures that describe the circumstances surrounding the coming of the promised Messiah. Unfortunately, we'll only be able to focus on a small subset of these Scriptures due to the class time constraints.

Before the Messiah would come, we are told in Malachi and Isaiah that there would be one who would prepare the way.

Malachi 3:1 - *"Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.*

Malachi 4:5-6 - ⁵ *"Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives. ⁶ His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse."*

Isaiah 40:3-5 - ³ *Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting,
"Clear the way through the wilderness for the LORD!
Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God!
⁴ Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills.
Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places.
⁵ Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together.
The LORD has spoken!"*

Of course, we know this messenger to be John the Baptist. Jesus confirmed this in Matthew.

Matthew 17:10-13 - ¹⁰ *Then his disciples asked him, "Why do the teachers of religious law insist that Elijah must return before the Messiah comes?"
¹¹ Jesus replied, "Elijah is indeed coming first to get everything ready. ¹² But I tell you, Elijah has already come, but he wasn't recognized, and they chose to abuse him. And in the same way they will also make the Son of Man suffer."
¹³ Then the disciples realized he was talking about John the Baptist.*

Matthew 3:1-3 - ¹ *In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, ² "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."
³ The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said,
"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming!
Clear the road for him!'"*

So, we have prophecies not only of Jesus but also of the predecessor who would prepare the way for him. One important thing to note here is that John the Baptist's ministry is believed to have started in A.D. 29 which would be shortly before Jesus started his ministry. This would mean that John was no sycophant who was merely trying to hitch a ride on the popularity of Christ. He was a powerful man of God sent to announce Christ's arrival.

Now the Jews have historically rejected Jesus as the Messiah. This should not really be surprising though since this rejection was also foretold in verses such as Isaiah 6:9-10. One of the key things that the Jews

are looking for in the Messiah is the return of Elijah. But they, like we all so often do, set their expectations on their own perceptions of what should unfold in future events rather than waiting to see how God would fulfill what was promised.

I would ask you to think back now and remember. When was the last time that God answered any of your prayers in **exactly** the way that you thought they should be answered? For me, it's been rare if ever. We must be careful not to fall into this same trap in our own lives of setting our own expectations of how God should answer our prayers.

Next, we see in Luke that Jesus was born in Bethlehem while his parents were traveling and that they would then later return to their home in Galilee. Matthew also tells us that Jesus later settled at Capernaum.

Luke 2:4-6 – ⁴And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. ⁵He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born.

Matthew 4:12-14 - ¹²When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he left Judea and returned to Galilee. ¹³He went first to Nazareth, then left there and moved to Capernaum, beside the Sea of Galilee, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴This fulfilled what God said through the prophet Isaiah:

Of course, we already knew from the following Old Testament passages that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and then later settle in this region.

Micah 5:2 – ²But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.

Isaiah 9:1,6 – ¹Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

⁶For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

These next set of prophetic Scriptures describe the nature of the coming Messiah. Please take note as we read the seeming contradictions in their descriptions of the Messiah.

Isaiah 42:1-4 - ¹ "Look at my servant, whom I strengthen.

He is my chosen one, who pleases me.

I have put my Spirit upon him.

He will bring justice to the nations.

²He will not shout

or raise his voice in public.

³He will not crush the weakest reed

or put out a flickering candle.

He will bring justice to all who have been wronged.

⁴He will not falter or lose heart

*until justice prevails throughout the earth.
Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction.”*

Isaiah 11:1-5 - ¹ *Out of the stump of David’s family will grow a shoot—
yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.*

² *And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*

³ *He will delight in obeying the LORD.
He will not judge by appearance
nor make a decision based on hearsay.*

⁴ *He will give justice to the poor
and make fair decisions for the exploited.
The earth will shake at the force of his word,
and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.*

⁵ *He will wear righteousness like a belt
and truth like an undergarment.*

(As an aside, it should be noted that in Isaiah 11:1 above it says that the Messiah will be a descendant of Jesse. In the genealogy of Jesus listed in Matthew, Jesse is listed in verse 1:5.)

In Isaiah 42, the Messiah is described as being a quiet and gentle soul who will *“not shout or raise his voice in public.”* ³ *He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle.”* Yet, in Isaiah 11:4 it says that *“The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked.”* This seems to be yet another contradiction in the nature of the coming Messiah. However, the following Scriptures illustrate that Jesus fit both of these descriptions.

John 8:7-11 – ⁷ *They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”* ⁸ *Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.*

⁹ *When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman.* ¹⁰ *Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”* ¹¹ *“No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”*

John 2:15-16 – ¹⁵ *Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers’ coins over the floor, and turned over their tables.* ¹⁶ *Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, “Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!”*

So, as you can see Jesus was very gentle and soft spoken until the holiness of the temple was being defiled. Then, his wrath was fierce!

In the next lesson, we’ll investigate the prophecies that describe the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.

Questions For Discussion

1. Why would the way need to be cleared for the coming Messiah as mentioned in Malachi and Isaiah?

2. Discuss the significance of a well-respected, powerful man of God like John the Baptist endorsing Jesus as the Messiah. How much more significant is it that John's ministry started before Jesus's?
3. In Malachi 4:5, it mentions that the prophet Elijah would be sent before the Messiah. Could this possibly be one and the same Elijah of the Old Testament? Why or why not?
4. What does it mean in Micah 5:2 when it says that, "*Yet a ruler of Israel, whose origins are in the distant past, will come from you on my behalf.*"? Specifically, what does this indicate about the origins of the One who will come?
5. Explore in Isaiah 9:6 about how the person described as "*For a child is born to us, a son is given to us*" could also be described as "*The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace?*" How did Jesus fit this description perfectly?
6. Discuss the conflicting descriptions of the Messiah in that "*He will not shout or raise his voice in public*" as stated in Isaiah 42 but also that "*The earth will shake at the force of his word, and one breath from his mouth will destroy the wicked*" as described in Isaiah 11.

Additional Questions For Discussion

1. Discuss what is meant in Malachi 4:5-6 when it says that God, "*His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers?*" How was this done?
2. Discuss what is meant in Isaiah 40:3-5 when it says, "*Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills. Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places*" before the glory of the Lord would be revealed?