



IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME

by Marilyn Joy Tyner

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.
(Gal. 4:4-5 ESV)

The day Jesus Christ was born has universe-rocking significance. At just the proper moment—"in the fullness of time"^[1]—God sent forth his Son to redeem humanity. Jesus willingly stepped into time and space to take on human flesh and accomplish the greatest rescue mission the world has ever known. *Love personified came down to earth!*

To grasp some of the infinite greatness of our Savior, let's telescope into the Bible's Old Testament (OT) to view six major predictive prophecies surrounding the Messiah's birth.^[2] Then we'll take a look at Jesus's fulfillment of them centuries later in the New Testament (NT). This will clarify the identity of the long-awaited Messiah and will likely stir our hearts with deep devotion for the King of all kings, who loves us and gave himself for us.



1. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

In the sixth century BC, the prophet Micah foretold that the Messiah would be born in the small town of Bethlehem. "O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."^[3] By revealing the precise name of the town for his divine Son's birth, God eliminated all other cities in the world as possibilities^[4]—setting the stage for people to recognize the epic Christmas Day miracle.

NT Fulfillment: Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Luke recorded that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, affirming his birthplace historically.^[5] Matthew also told us, "After Jesus was born in

Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?'"^[6] Other fulfilled prophecies speak of the wise men (the magi) as camel riders who would bow down to the Messiah-King and present him with praises and royal gifts of gold and frankincense.^[7-8]



2. The Messiah would come from a highly specific lineage.

To fulfill the credentials of the Messiah, one single person would need to fulfill all of these lineage requirements: (1) be the offspring (seed) of a woman, (2) be born of a virgin, (3) be born of the seed of Abraham (come from the Hebrew race), (4) be the descendant of Isaac, (5) be the descendant of Jacob, (6) come from the tribe of Judah, (7) come from the family line of Jesse, (8) and come from the family line of David.^[9] Consider also the miraculous nature of the first requirement. For biologically speaking, the *seed* (the Hebrew word for offspring) comes from the man, not the woman.^[10]

NT Fulfillment: God surely guides history, for Jesus fulfilled all of those genealogical prophecies at his birth.^[11] For example, when the apostle Paul wrote that the Son of God was "born of woman," he affirmed the Genesis 3:15 prophecy indicating the Messiah would be the offspring (*seed*) of the woman.^[12] Also, both Matthew and Luke presented eyewitness testimony of Jesus's virgin birth.^[13] In one verse, Matthew said an angel told Joseph, "Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."^[14]



3. The Messiah would have a forerunner proclaiming his arrival.

Isaiah prophesied about a forerunner who would precede the Messiah.^[15] It begins, "A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'"^[16] Malachi gave a similar prophecy about the coming messenger.^[17] God declared, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me."^[18] His assurance that a forerunner would precede the Messiah exemplifies how all of God's prophecies show, after their fulfillment, that he's faithful to perform all his promises.

NT Fulfillment: That Malachi prophecy was quoted in all four of the Gospels, affirming that John the Baptist came as the Messiah's forerunner, and his voice was heard.^[19] Even John's father,

Zacharias, prophesied that his child (in Elizabeth's womb) would be called "the prophet of the Most High" and would "go before the Lord to prepare his ways."^[20] And by God's special providence, Elizabeth was a comfort to Mary when the angel Gabriel told her she'd miraculously give birth to the Messiah. The two of them spent three months together after Elizabeth's own conception miracle (by giving birth to John in her old age after years of barrenness)—thus illustrating that "nothing will be impossible with God."^[21]



4. The Messiah would be the target of Herod's death plan.

The prophetic picture presented in Jeremiah 31:15 has both a far and near fulfillment.^[22] At the time it was written, it referred to the bitter weeping and mourning that took place when mothers were separated from their children at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Its future reference was to Jewish mothers in the first century AD who wept bitterly at the murder of their infant sons by Herod.^[23]

NT Fulfillment: Matthew wrote that Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus was an infant and King Herod ordered the death of all the male children, two years old and under, who lived in the Bethlehem region.^[24] Although Herod attempted to destroy the newborn "King of the Jews," God thwarted his plan.^[25] Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt with the baby Jesus for safety—fulfilling yet another prophecy where God speaks in Hosea.^[26]



5. The Messiah would be born of a virgin.

Isaiah 7:14 is one of the most famous prophecies about the Christmas story, and it points to Jesus's incarnation.^[27] This passage has a near and a far fulfillment. In the immediate context, the Lord gave a supernatural sign to Ahaz, king of Judah: "Behold, the virgin [*almah* in Hebrew, which can also mean "young woman"] shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." God was illustrating his sovereign ability to know the future, that Judah would receive relief from attacks by Israel and Syria.^[28] In the distant context, God's sign meant that an actual virgin would miraculously conceive by the Holy Spirit's power and give birth to his own divine Son.^[29] Also consider the glorious Isaiah 9:6 prophecy. It begins, "For unto us a child is born" referring to Jesus's birth from the human side of the Christmas story (his humanity). It continues, "To us a son is given" referring to Jesus's birth from the divine side of

the story (his deity).^[30] The Messiah would be fully God and fully man.

NT Fulfillment: Three of the reasons we know Jesus was miraculously born of a virgin are: (1) The Lord's supernatural sign to Ahaz was addressed not only to him but to the entire house of David,^[31] from which the Messiah would come. (2) In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures in the first few centuries before Jesus came), the Jews translated the word *almah* using the Greek word *parthenos*, which only means "virgin."^[32] And the Gospels of Matthew and Luke present eyewitness testimony to this truth, including that of Mary herself.^[33] Thankfully, Jesus Christ was born of the virgin Mary historically to save us from our sins. "If Jesus were not fully man, he could not stand in the place of sinful man and be a substitute for the punishment man deserves. If He were not fully God, his sacrifice would be insufficient."^[34]



6. The Messiah's names would be Jesus and Immanuel.

The name *Jesus* was predetermined long before his birth. Jesus in Hebrew is *Yeshua* (short for *Yehoshua*, meaning "God is salvation").^[35] And *Yeshua* appears numerous times in the OT. So although the Messiah did not receive the name Jesus until his birth, "He still was *Yehoshua* because He has always been salvation from the beginning to the end."^[36] Looking again at the virgin birth prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, it also specified that the coming Messiah would be called *Immanuel*. In Isaiah's next chapter, he also mentioned "God is with us" (*Immanuel* in Hebrew)—referring to the Immanuel prophecy.^[37]

NT Fulfillment: Luke wrote that the angel Gabriel told Mary she was to name the Christ Child *Jesus*.^[38] Similarly, Matthew recorded that another angel told Joseph to call him *Jesus*, adding a reason: "For he will save his people from their sins."^[39] He then quoted the Isaiah 7:14 virgin prophecy, confirming that God fulfilled it when Mary gave birth to Jesus, and that he'd be called *Immanuel*.^[40] Jesus was not spoken to directly by that name, yet his nature and earthly ministry make him Immanuel.^[41] Jesus is literally "God with us" by his incarnation, and he'll always be with us!

Thus, the long-awaited Messiah—who loves us so deeply that he died on a Roman cross in 33 AD to deliver us from sin and its eternal consequences—is *Yeshua* and *Immanuel*. According to the grand narrative of the Bible,^[42] God sent

his divine Son to earth to be born on Christmas Day—to redeem us in the fullness of time.

“Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift [Jesus]!”^[43]



CONSIDER: Do these beams of prophetic illumination from Scripture remind you that Jesus Christ and eternal salvation are divine gifts, which the King freely offers to everyone? Have you chosen to open those gifts with gratitude and enjoy them now and forevermore, by simply praying to receive them?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, thank you for leaving the glories of heaven to come to earth as an infant in obedience to the Father and out of love for us. The wonder of all wonders is that you loved us so much that you became one of us. Then you rocked the universe by shedding your precious blood on the cross to purchase our salvation. Hallelujah! Thank you, amen.

AN APOLOGETIC TAKEWAY: Based on these six integral prophecies surrounding Christ’s birth, fulfilled centuries later by Jesus Christ, we can see the great probability that He is the long-predicted Messiah and is God in human flesh (Phil. 2:6–7). Based on all 300 messianic prophecies in the Old Testament fulfilled centuries later by Jesus, we can acknowledge God’s faithfulness to perform His promises (Lam. 3:23). And based on the Bible’s overall theme—of God’s plan of redemption for humanity—we can accept the revelation of God’s great grace and sacrificial love for all people in that the Savior of the world was born to die for us (Rev. 13:8).

^[1]Gal. 4:4. ^[2]The OT contains over 300 messianic prophecies fulfilled by Jesus Christ (a convincing proof of the reliability of the Bible). ^[3]Num. 24:17, 19; Micah 5:2. ^[4]Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999), p. 174. See also Josh and Sean McDowell’s *Evidence* expanded, 2017, Chap. 9. ^[5]Luke 2:4. ^[6]Matt. 2:1–2. See also John 7:42. ^[7–8]Psalms 72:8–11; Isaiah 60:3, 6 (fulfilled in Matt. 2:1, 11). ^[9]Gen. 3:15; 21:12; 22:18; 49:10; Num. 24:17; 2 Sam. 7:12–16; Isa. 7:14; 11:1, 10; Jer. 23:5; 1 Chron. 17:11–14. Josh McDowell, 168–173. ^[10]ICR’s Bible Study Tools (www.icr.org/bible/Genesis/3/15/). ^[11]Matt. 1:1–2, 6, 18, 24–25; Luke 1:26–35; 3:23–35; Gal. 3:16; 4:4; and Heb. 7:14. ^[12]Gal. 4:4. ^[13]Matt. 1:18, 24–25; and Luke 1:26–35. ^[14]Matt. 1:20. ^[15]Isaiah 40:3–8. ^[16]Isaiah 40:3. ^[17]Mal. 3:1. ^[18]Mal. 3:1(a). *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee* (Thomas Nelson) on Malachi 3. ^[19]Matt. 3:1–3; Mark 1:2–4; Luke 3:2–6; and John 1:23. ^[20]Luke 1:76. ^[21]Luke 1:38. See also vv. 36–56. ^[22]A (hermeneutical) principle of predictive prophecy. ^[23]*Jon Courson’s Application Commentary* (Thomas Nelson) on Jer. 31:10–15. ^[24]Matt. 2:6–18. ^[25]Matt. 2:13–15. ^[26]Hosea 11:1. ^[27]The Christian doctrine that God took on human form in the Person of Jesus Christ (e.g., John 1:1, 14). ^[28]David Guzik, *The Enduring Word*, online Bible Commentary, on Isaiah 7:14. ^[29]Luke 1:35. See McGee on Isaiah 7:14. ^[30]The BLB, Chuck Smith’s commentary on Isaiah 9:6. www.blueletterbible.org. ^[31]Isaiah 7:13. ^[32]“Thus, the Jews were convinced that this was a prophecy of a miracle that a virgin would give forth a son.” Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, online interview at Patrick Henry College, 12/19/2013. ^[33]*Ibid.* ^[34]Guzik on Isaiah 9:6. ^[35]<https://www.compellingtruth.org/Yeshua-Jesus.html> ^[36]The BLB, <https://blogs.blueletterbible.org/blb/2012/01/31/yahweh-is-salvation/>. ^[37]See Guzik on Isa. 8:10. ^[38]Luke 1:31. ^[39]Matt. 1:21. ^[40]Matt. 1:22–23. ^[41]Courson on Matthew 1:22–23. ^[42]Guzik on Genesis 3:15. Here God first mentioned his “plan of salvation through the one known as the Seed of the woman.” ^[43]2 Cor. 9:15.

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