



CHRIST: THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

by

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“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

—Isaiah 9:6

Some time ago, I had the opportunity to speak to a man who had no belief whatsoever in the Scriptures as any sort of divine revelation from God. He was a writer who was articulate and well-educated. While he was well-read, he was completely ignorant of any evidences for the truthfulness of the Christian faith and the Scriptures which reveal it. He said the Bible was simply a book written by men, just like any other book. I said,

“That’s very interesting. I would like to read some statements to you about someone and have you tell me, assuredly, without question, about whom I am reading.” He agreed and I began to read:

- **“They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head” (Isaiah 69:4).**
- **Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?” (Psalm 2:1).**
“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed” (v. 2).
- **“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me” (Psalm 41:9).**
- **“I shall smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered” (Mark 14:27).**
- **“If ye think good, give me my price . . . so they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver . . . and cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of**

them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord” (Zechariah 11:12–13).

- “They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod, upon the cheek” (Micah 5:1).
- “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Isaiah 50:6).
- “They pierced my hands and my feet” (Psalm 22:16).
- “My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1).
- “All they that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him” (Psalm 22:7–8)
- “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 21:22).
- “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint” (Psalm 22:14).
- “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4).
- “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).
- “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psalm 22:18).
- “He was numbered with the transgressors . . . and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).
- “He hath poured out his soul unto death” (v. 12).
- “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof” (Exodus 12:46).
- “He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken” (Psalm 34:20).
- “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced” (Zechariah 12:10).
- “He made his grave . . . with the rich in his death” (Isaiah 53:9).
- “They pierced my hands and feet” (Psalm 22:16).
- “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither will thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:10).
- Thou hast ascended on high, thou has led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men” (Psalm 68:18).
- “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou upon my right hand until I make mine enemies thy footstool” (Psalm 110:1).
- There shall be a root of Jesse . . . to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10).

I said to him, “About whom did I read?”

He replied, “Well, you obviously read of the life and ministry and suffering and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.”

I said, “Is there any question in your mind about that?”

He answered, “No. That could refer to no one else.”

I replied, “Well then, I would want you to understand that all of the Scriptures I just read to you are taken from the Old Testament, which was completed some four hundred years before

Jesus was born. No critic, no atheist, no agnostic has ever once claimed that any one of those writings was written after His birth. In fact, they were translated from Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria some 150 years before He was born. If this is merely a book written by men, would you please explain to me how these words were written?"

He said, "I haven't the faintest idea." He was completely nonplused. He had never heard those things before in his life. Indeed, they cannot be explained on any purely humanistic presuppositions.

It is noteworthy that in no other religious writings in the world do we find any specific predictive prophecies like we find in the Scripture. You will find no predictive prophecies whatsoever in the writings of Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Lao-Tse or Hinduism. Yet in the Scripture there are well over two thousand prophecies, most of which have already been fulfilled. They are so specific in nature that they burn all the bridges behind them. If they are not fulfilled, it leaves no room for excuse. How can these be explained?

Of all the attacks that have ever been made upon the Scripture, there has never been one book written by a skeptic to disprove the prophecies of the Scripture. Though the Bible has been attacked at every other place, the one place where God rests His inspiration, saying, "*By this ye will know that I have sent a prophet,*" is that which he foretells, comes infallibly to pass.

On this subject one lady said very casually and off-handedly, "Well, that's simple. Prophecy! What is prophecy? Why, we have prophets today." Anyone who would confuse the infallible record of over two thousand prophecies of the Scripture with the hit-or-miss prognostications of so-called modern prophets knows little about either.

The Bible prophecies are altogether unexpected! I know of no one ever prophesying that any other human being would rise from the dead and ascend into Heaven. That is exceedingly improbable. The chance of it happening by coincidence is incalculable. No. The Bible is not merely a book written by men; it is a book written by God through men, and the heart of its prophetic message is Jesus Christ.

Let us focus upon three prophecies about Christ. One is about His birth, another about His person, and another about His work. Centuries before Christ's birth, the prophet Micah said: **"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting"** (Micah 5:2). Fulfilled by coincidence? Yet, specifically out of that particular Bethlehem of Ephratah, where Jesus was born, there would come a ruler of Israel who has been from everlasting; the eternal One, the divine Son of God.

Not only is the place of His birth precisely designated by the Scripture centuries before He came, but even the exact date of His ministry. About five hundred years before Jesus Christ was born, the prophet Daniel was given an astounding prophecy known as the "seventy weeks of Daniel." Seventy weeks of years, or seven times seventy-four hundred and ninety years were prophesied. Seven times sixty-nine years, or four hundred and eighty—three years, we are told

would elapse between the going forth of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the anointing of the Messiah.

These are dates that are strongly and solidly confirmed in the Scripture, and in secular history. The decree was made by Cyrus the Great to return the Jews from the seventy-year captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple and, eventually, the whole city. What was the date of that decree? The date was 458 B.C. Seven times sixty-nine years or four hundred and eighty—three years later brings you to precisely A.D. 26. As any good biblical encyclopedia will tell you, in that year Jesus was anointed as Messiah, baptized by John, and anointed by God to preach the Gospel to the poor. The precise place and the exact date of His ministry were clearly established five hundred years before He came. There is nothing comparable to this anywhere else in the world.

Concerning His person—who was He? Millions of Americans have no idea who this baby in a manger really was. A great man. Yes. He was the greatest man who ever lived, but He was much more than that! In Isaiah, the ninth chapter and the sixth verse, are those familiar words which are sung in the *Messiah*: “**For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given.... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace**” (Isaiah 9:6). Who is this babe that was born in a Bethlehem stable? It was none other than the Creator of the galaxies—that One by whom all things came into existence—God Himself—the second person of the Triune Godhead—that Lord which became incarnate in human flesh. His name shall be called the Mighty God!

I am amazed by how many people consider themselves too intelligent to accept Jesus as their divine Redeemer.

Let us look at the intelligent decisions of literary men about who Jesus Christ was. Scientists have ascertained that **William Shakespeare** had the largest vocabulary of any human being who ever wrote. Vocabulary is the surest measure of I.Q. Shakespeare is acknowledged by all as one of the greatest geniuses ever to walk upon this earth. What did he think about Jesus? He said: “I commend my soul into the hands of God, my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing through the merits of Jesus Christ my Savior to be made partaker of life everlasting.”

Lord Byron, that great genius of letters, stated: “If ever man was God or God man, Jesus Christ was both.”

Alfred Tennyson, whose tremendous writings have thundered through the ages, said: “And so the word had breath, and wrought with human hands the creed of creeds in loveliness of perfect deeds, more strong than all poetic thought.”

John Greenleaf Whittier declared: “The ground of hope for myself and for mankind is in that divine fullness of love which was manifested in the life, teachings and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the infinite mercy of God so revealed, and not in any worth or merit of my own nature...”

Charles Dickens, whose Christmas tale has delighted millions, said: “I now most solemnly impress upon you the truth and beauty of the Christian religion as it came from the lips of Christ himself and the impossibility of going far wrong if you humbly but heartfully respond to it. I commit my soul to the mercy of God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

The greatest genius of Russian letters, **Tolstoy**, said this: “For thirty-five years of my life I was in the proper acceptance of the word, a nihilist, a man who believed in nothing. Five years ago my faith came to me. I believed in the doctrine of Jesus Christ and my whole life underwent a sudden transformation. Life and death ceased to be evil. Instead of despair I tasted joy and happiness that death could not take away.”

Lecky, the rationalist who wrote *The Rise of Rationalism in Europe*, though a skeptic himself, said: “It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice.”

Richter said: “Jesus Christ was the holiest of the mighty and mightiest among the holy; who lifted with pierced hands empires off their hinges and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel and still governs the ages.”

General Lew Wallace, an atheist, who set out to write a book to once and for all destroy Christianity, said this: “After six years given to the impartial investigation of Christianity as to its truth or falsity, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that Jesus Christ was the Messiah of the Jews, the Savior of the world, and my own personal Redeemer.”

Said **Sidney Lanier**: “Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee, Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ?” The greatest of men in every field of learning or endeavor the world has known, attest that Jesus Christ, the Divine Redeemer, the Son of God, is who He claimed to be.

What did Christ come to do! He came to take upon Himself our guilt; to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows. As Isaiah said, “**He was wounded for our transgressions**” (**Isaiah 53:5**). God is just and holy. Your sins and mine will be punished—of that there cannot be the slightest doubt! The only question is: Will they be punished on us in Hell forever or will they be punished on our innocent substitute, Jesus Christ, upon the Cross on Calvary? It all depends on whether you receive Him as your own or not.

E. A. Rowell describes himself as the Atheist of atheists. He says:

My parents and other immediate relatives were proud of their unbelief. I was nourished on the vaunting skeptics of the ages.

But I observed the futile amazement with which every skeptic from Celsus to Wells stood around the cradle of the Christ. I wondered why this helpless Babe was thrust into the world at a time when Roman greed, Jewish hate, and Greek subtlety would combine to crush Him. And yet this most powerful, devastating

combination ever known in history served only to advance the cause of the Infant who was born in a stable—the purest human being in the world born in the filthiest place in the world.

No unbeliever could tell me why His words are as charged with power today as they were nineteen hundred years ago. Nor could scoffers explain how those pierced hands pulled human monsters with gnarled souls out of a hell of iniquity and overnight transformed them into steadfast, glorious heroes who died in torturing flames, that others might know the love and mighty power of the Christ who had given peace to their souls.

No agnostic could make clear why seemingly immortal empires pass into oblivion, while the glory and power of the murdered Galilean are gathering beauty and momentum with every attack and every age.

Nor could any scoffer explain, as Jesus Himself so daringly foretold, why by telephone, airplane, and radio, by rail, horse, and foot, His words are piercing the densest forest, scaling the highest mountains, crossing the deepest seas and the widest deserts, making converts in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people on earth.

No doubter could tell me how this isolated Jew could utter words at once so simple that a child could understand them and so deep that the greatest thinkers cannot plumb their shining depths...

But I learned that the paradox was plain and the mystery solved when I accepted Him for what He claimed to be—the Son of God, come from heaven a Saviour of men, but above all, my own Saviour. I learned to thrill at the angel's words: "Behold... unto *you* is born this day... a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Do you remember Scrooge standing outside the window looking in at Tiny Tim and his family celebrating Christmas with love and warmth and joy? Many people today have much in common with Scrooge. They do not go around muttering "Bah, humbug," but they stand outside looking in at a love and a warmth and a joy that they have never experienced; a transformation of soul that they know nothing about. Their lives are empty and cold, and Christmastime for them is often a time of great desolation. Are you, this Christmas season, outside looking in? For you, is religion merely a matter of externals? Have you ever experienced what Tolstoy described as that life transforming experience of coming to know Jesus Christ personally? Do you know what He can do for your life?

One man, who was a brilliant skeptic and had attacked the Bible for years, said that finally he decided to read it through. He found that many things he thought it taught, it did not teach at all, and other cavils vanished before a candid search. In the New Testament he found in Jesus Christ the peace and contentment that he had never known in all of his life. He said that the knowledge that his mistakes, his wrongs, his sins, no matter what they were, were all forgiven, was the greatest thrill in the world. The dread with which he once looked forward to his remaining years

here upon this earth, had given way to a fountain of joy and praise to the Christ for whom he had always had respect, but Whom now he had trusted as his own friend and his own Savior.

This Christmas season, as we remember Him Who was born in Bethlehem, I would ask you: Has He been born in thee? He has, only if you have trusted Him as your own Savior and surrendered your life to Him as Lord and master. If not, your life is still forlorn. I pray that you might know the joy that Jesus came to bring to this world this day.

PRAYER: Father, for those outside looking in at the experience of the grace of God that brings forgiveness and transformation and certainty of eternal life and the assurance of Heaven, and the joy that sins are forgiven, O Lord, may they, this Christmas Sunday, say from their hearts, “Oh, Lord Jesus, Who did condescend to be born in a stable, come and be born in my heart. There is room, Lord Jesus, in my heart for Thee.” Amen.

Sermon delivered by Dr. D. James Kennedy on December 21, 1975, at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

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