

FIVE PROOFS THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH

Five Proofs From The Prophets That Jesus Is The Messiah (Matthew 1:18-2:23)

Introduction**Five Proofs That Jesus Is The Messiah**

- Jesus was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14 ◊ Matthew 1:23).
- Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 ◊ Matthew 2:6).
- Jesus was called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1 ◊ Matthew 2:14).
- Jesus was preserved from slaughter (Jeremiah 31:15 ◊ Matthew 2:16-18).
- Jesus would be called a Nazarene (Isaiah 53:3 ◊ Matthew 2:23).

1. It is around December that the spirit of make believe manifests itself. Parents relate stories of the nativity and Father Christmas to their children who have not yet developed the ability to do abstract thinking. While it is an exciting time of the year, it is important to distinguish fact from fiction. Joseph struggled to distinguish fact from fiction: Mary, his betrothed, was pregnant and he knew that the child was not his (Matthew 1:18-19). But God revealed the facts of the matter and assured him that "... what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20).
2. For more than 2,000 years people have questioned whether Matthew's account is true or only make believe. Matthew, however, presents his account of the early life of Jesus as fact and presents five proofs from the prophets to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. He is writing primarily to Jews who accept the prophets as inspired spokesmen from God.
3. Matthew is NOT asking us to "make believe" these things are true; he is asking us to place our trust in Jesus as the Messiah, "The one who saves His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:18, 21).

I. What Did The Concept Of Messiah Mean To Matthew And His Jewish Readers?

When we understand what "Messiah" meant to the Jews, then we will understand why Matthew presents Jesus as he does.

1. In the first two chapters, Matthew mentions the Messiah five times (Matthew 1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2:4).
 - a. **Matthew 1:1.** Here Matthew defines something of his purpose for writing, and it summarizes Jesus' genealogy, connecting Jesus with Abraham and David.
 - 1) This is significant because God had promised that through Abraham's descendants One would come who would bless all nations (Genesis 12:3), and, through Nathan the prophet, He predicted the coming of a King that would sit on David's throne (2 Samuel 7:11-13).
 - 2) In tracing Jesus' lineage through these two men and identifying Him as a descendent of Judah (Genesis 49:10), Matthew connected Jesus to the Jewish expectation created by the history of the Jewish nation and the promises of Scripture.
 - b. **Matthew 1:16.** Here Matthew identifies Jesus as the object of immediate history. He is not just a descendent of Abraham and David, but born now to Joseph and Mary (cp. Romans 1:1-4). The implication is that God is NOW intervening in history in a unique and powerful way.
 - c. **Matthew 1:17.** Here Matthew reiterates the culmination of the history in intervals of fourteen generations.
 - d. **Matthew 1:18.** Here Matthew calls attention to the unusual way in which Jesus was born. He was born before Joseph and Mary came together (Note the NASB translates "Christ" here. "Christ" is the Greek for Messiah in the Hebrew. It is "Christos" throughout Matthew's Greek text).
 - e. **Matthew 2:4.** Here Matthew shows how the priests and scribes observed, based on what is written in Micah, that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
2. The word "Messiah" is from the Hebrew word *mashiah*, which literally means "the anointed" and traces back to the history of God anointing the priests and kings of Israel. Oil was symbolically poured on them as an indication of God selecting them for their special function (Saul - 1 Samuel 10:1; cp. 11:15; David - 1 Samuel 16:12-13; cp. 2 Samuel 2:4; Solomon - 1 Kings 1:39; 1 Chronicles 29:22; Jehu - 2 Kings 9:1-6; Joash - 2 Kings 11:9-12; Jehoahaz - 2 Kings 23:30). Matthew implies that Jesus is the one specially anointed by God as King of Israel; the one promised by the prophets.



3. When Jesus was born there was already a general expectation of the Messiah. The following is an extract from an article I came across (see www.cwi.org.uk/judaism/jewishperspectives/messiah.html).

Waiting For Messiah

First of all, it is obvious that there was a general expectation of the Messiah. For instance, we read of those coming to John the Baptist in Luke 3:15. The people were in expectation and all men mused in their hearts of John whether he was Messiah or not. Consider Philip's explanation to Nathaniel in John 1:45: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote." Or the Samaritan woman John 4:25: "I know that Messiah is coming ... When He comes He will tell us all things."

Clearly, there were those who were more exercised with regard to his coming – Simeon, for instance, in Luke 2:25, "waiting for the Consolation of Israel", and Anna in Luke 2:38: "Coming in at that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." So there were those who were particularly exercised with regard to this expectation of the coming of the Messiah.

II. Matthew Presents Five Proofs From The Prophets As Evidence That Jesus Is The Messiah

Matthew presents five scriptures from the prophets that had been fulfilled in regards to Jesus' birth, the place of His birth, being called out of Egypt, the slaughter of the innocents, and His rejection.

1. **Isaiah 7:14 (Matthew 1:23)**. Matthew affirms that Jesus was born of a virgin. Some have questioned Matthew's use of this text; observing that in the Hebrew text a word is used that could be translated "young woman," not necessarily a virgin. But Matthew uses the Greek term that means "virgin." (i) He specifically mentions that Mary was found to be with child before she and Joseph came together (**Matthew 1:18**), (ii) An angel explains to Joseph, "The child is conceived of the Holy Spirit" (**Matthew 1:20**), and (iii) Matthew adds, "Joseph kept her a virgin until she gave birth" (**Matthew 1:25**). The significance of this birth, Matthew says, He is "God with us" (**Matthew 1:23**) and "He will save His people from their sins" (**Matthew 1:21**).

The Hebrew word 'almāh in Isaiah may well mean "Young woman", but consider: in those days a young unmarried woman was expected to be a virgin. "Young woman" and "virgin" went hand-in-hand; they were practically synonymous.
2. **Micah 5:2 (Matthew 2:6)**. Micah predicts that a ruler would come from the tribe of Judah, and that He would be born in Bethlehem. A Messianic interpretation was given to this text by all the chief priests and the scribes by consensus judgment. When Herod asked them where the Messiah was to be born. They said, "Bethlehem."
3. **Hosea 11:1 (Matthew 2:14)**. The context refers to the nation of Israel being called out of Egyptian bondage. Matthew interprets it of Joseph and Mary and Jesus leaving Egypt. We might object and say, "Matthew has taken this passage out of its context and applied it to an unrelated event (namely, Joseph, Mary and Jesus coming out of Egypt). (i) But to say this fails to recognize that Matthew sees the whole Old Testament as converging in one Messianic event, and (ii) Some passages he sees as directly fulfilling an Old Testament passage from a historical perspective, as in the two previous passages (**Isaiah 7:14**; **Micah 5:2**). Others he sees from a type – anti-type perspective. Israel coming out of Egypt typifies Joseph, Mary and Jesus leaving Egypt. Their exit from Egypt is the anti-type to the Exodus. Like Solomon was the type of the coming King. Moses the type of the new Deliverer. The Levites the type of the coming priesthood. The sacrificial animals the type of the coming sacrifice.
4. **Jeremiah 31:15 (Matthew 2:16-18)**. Those exiled to Babylonian captivity assembled to begin their march to Babylon at Ramah (**Jeremiah 40:1**).
 - a. The image of the matriarch weeping is because her descendants are being carried away into captivity. Later she is told to stop weeping because the Lord will deliver them from their captivity (**Jeremiah 31:16**).
 - b. Matthew presents this passage in reference to Herod killing the babies two years old and under by suggesting a type and anti-type format. He views the weeping associated with the death of the children of Bethlehem, like that of the captivity. But God preserved a remnant of the Israelites in captivity in Babylon and brought them back home after a while. Likewise, despite Herod's slaughter, God preserved His Son, Jesus, in Egypt and brought Him back to Nazareth of Galilee.

- c. Although things may look bleak, God is not finished! He turns weeping into rejoicing! Note how God was at work in the lives of Joseph, Mary and Jesus (**Matthew 2:19-22**).

5. Isaiah 53:3 (Matthew 2:23).

- a. Jesus lived in a city called Nazareth. Matthew says, “This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: ‘He shall be called a Nazarene’” (**Matthew 2:23**). Note the plural “prophets”. Matthew doesn’t have a particular prophet in mind, but, like Matthew 26:56, refers to “prophets” in general.
- b. The problem is that Nazareth is never mentioned in the Old Testament! Various theories have been advanced (which we will not enter into here). He is probably referring to the fact that the prophets pointed to Jesus’ lowliness and rejection by men. Matthew likely using a term of his day, “Nazarene”, that indicates someone who is despised. One writer suggested that Matthew could have used “Samaritan”, and you know what the Jews thought about them! Note John 1:45-46. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” The prophets did indicate that He would be unimpressive, despised, and rejected.
- 1) Humble riding on a colt of a donkey (**Zechariah 9:9-10**).
 - 2) Pierced (**Zechariah 12:10**).
 - 3) Struck down (**Zechariah 13:7**).
 - 4) Sufferer (**Psalms 22, 69**).
 - 5) Servant (**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**).
 - 6) Despised/rejected (**Isaiah 49:7**).
 - 7) Like one from whom men hide their face; despised, and we did not esteem Him (**Isaiah 53:1-3**).

III. Understanding What Matthew Is Calling On His Readers To Do

Matthew is asking his readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah promised by God through the prophets.

1. People have criticized Matthew’s use of the Old Testament texts. They have questioned his use of language. Some deny his claims of prophecy as originating from God. Some deny His claim that Jesus is the Messiah.
2. Whatever you do with the idea of a promised Messiah... whatever you do with Matthew’s uses of the Old Testament texts... whatever you do with the concept of God revealing things through prophets... understand what Matthew is calling on you to do.
 - a. He is asking you to accept the prophets as revealing information from God.
 - b. He is asking you to believe in a God that knows future events.
 - c. He is asking you to believe that Jesus was born of a virgin and that He is “God with us.”
 - d. He is asking you to believe that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a leader, ruler and shepherd of people.
 - e. He is asking you to believe He was called out of Egypt, like Israel was called out of Egypt.
 - f. He is asking you to believe in one that was considered unimpressive and who was despised and rejected.
 - g. He is asking you to believe that Jesus is the Messiah sent by God to save His people from their sins.
3. He is NOT asking you to “make believe” these things are true. He IS asking us to place our trust in Jesus as “the one who saves us from sin” (**Matthew 1:21**).
4. So the bottom line is, “Do you believe it or NOT?” To make no decision is to decide not to believe it, to take no action. That’s what most people do. But Matthew does not allow for any middle ground; no fence sitting. You cannot “make believe.” You are either in or out! If you are in, it means:

- a. You accept the existence of God.
- b. You accept God knowing future events.
- c. You accept Scripture as God's revelation.
- d. You accept a virgin birth.
- e. You accept Jesus as the Messiah, sent from God to save His people from their sins.

Summary

1. The prophets had been prophesying of the coming of the Messiah for hundreds of years, and He came at a time when there was an expectancy of His coming. The Jews understood that (i) the Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham and a descendant of King David, (ii) He would come from the tribe of Judah, and (iii) He would be born in Bethlehem. In his gospel, Matthew shows these facts to be true of Jesus (**Matthew 1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2:4**).
2. In the first two chapters of his gospel, Matthew sets forth five proofs that Jesus is the Messiah, which are founded on the writings of the prophets: (i) Jesus was born of a virgin (**Isaiah 7:14 < Matthew 1:23**), (ii) Jesus was of the tribe of Judah and born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2 < Matthew 2:6**), (iii) Jesus was called out of Egypt (**Hosea 11:1 < Matthew 2:14**), (iv) Jesus was preserved from slaughter (**Jeremiah 31:15 < Matthew 2:16-18**), (v) Jesus would be called a Nazarene (**Isaiah 53:3 < Matthew 2:23**).
3. There are seven things that Matthew is asking his readers to believe, but, ultimately, he wants us to believe that Jesus is the Messiah sent by God to save His people from their sins.
4. If you believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that He bore your sins in His own body on the cross (**1 Peter 2:24**), then you need to repent of your sin and be baptised – it is at the point of your obedience that God will wash away your sins (**Mark 16:16; Acts 2:36; 22:16**). Talk to someone about your desire today.

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