

CENTURIES OLD PROPHECIES FULFILLED

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By Pastor Stan
Matthew 1:18-25

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INTRO.

-- Christmas is a story filled with awe and wonder for many reasons, but one of the most obvious is that it is a story of miracles, a story filled with the supernatural workings of God.

-- For this Christmas season, when we're in the grip of a COVID pandemic and all of the disruptions it has brought into our lives, it's good for us to lift our eyes above our troubles to see the sovereign, omnipotent God and to remember the miracles that He performed to fulfill His promise of a Redeemer and to provide for our salvation. So, during the weeks ahead we will examine and reflect on the miraculous events that make up the Christmas story. It's my desire that as we meditate on these miraculous events that we will be drawn to worship this amazing God who loved us enough to send His Son to us and for us.

-- The first of the Christmas miracles that I want to consider today is the miracle of fulfilled prophecies. The story of Christmas does not start with angels appearing to Mary and Joseph. It starts centuries, even millennia, earlier, all the way back to the Garden of Eden, where the first prophecy of the coming Messiah was given.

I. Fulfilled Prophecies

A. The Promise of a Messiah

-- That first prophecy was the promise made by God in the Garden of Eden immediately following Adam's sin, the promise of a Messiah who would defeat Satan. As He pronounced judgment on Satan, God said:

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

-- The prophecies about the coming Savior would not be only general in nature. They would also be highly specific prophecies.

B. His Nation

-- There is a prophecy about the nation in which the Messiah would be born.

1. The Prophecy

-- **Genesis 12:1a, 3** The Lord had said to Abram...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

2. The Fulfillment

-- Speaking to the Jewish people outside the Temple following Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, Peter declared the fulfillment of the prophetic promise.

Acts 3:25-26 (NLT) You are the children of those prophets, and you are included in the covenant God promised to your ancestors. For God said to Abraham, "Through your descendants all the families on earth will be blessed." 26 When God raised up his servant, Jesus, he sent him first to you people of Israel, to bless you by turning each of you back from your sinful ways.

C. His Tribe

-- The prophecy of the Messiah not only identified His nation but also His tribe.

1. The Prophecy

Genesis 49:10 (NLT) The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honor.

2. The Fulfillment

Luke 3:23b-33 [Jesus] was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph … 33 … the son of Judah …

D. His Family

-- The prophecies even told what family in the tribe of Judah the Messiah would descend from.

1. The Prophecy

Isaiah 11:10 In that day the Root of Jesse [the father of David] will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nation will rally to him

2. The Fulfillment

Luke 2:4-5 So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

E. His Mother

-- One of the most important prophecies was a prophecy about the Messiah's mother made by Isaiah 700 years before Christ's birth.

1. The Prophecy

Isaiah 7:14a Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son…

2. The Fulfillment

Matthew 1:20, 22-23a … an angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph] in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" … 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son…,"

F. His Name/Title

-- Isaiah's prophecy also included a title that pointed to the true nature of the Messiah.

1. The Prophecy

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

2. The Fulfillment

-- Matthew cites and elaborates on this prophecy when he tells about the angel's announcement to Joseph.

Matthew 1:21, 23 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins." … 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means, 'God with us.'"

G. His Birthplace

-- Remarkably, the OT prophecies of the coming Messiah also foretold exactly where he would be born some 700 years later.

1. The Prophecy

Micah 5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of

Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.

2. The Fulfillment

-- Luke records the fulfillment of that amazing prophecy.

Luke 2:4-7 So Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

II. What Christmas' Fulfilled Prophecies Tell Us about God.

-- Christmas' fulfilled prophecies reveal to us important insights into the attributes and character of our God.

A. He Is Omniscient.

-- The fact that God can foretell with perfect accuracy such highly specific details points, of course, to His omniscience. When we say that God is omniscient, we mean that He is perfect in His knowledge, that He knows all things in one eternal act. It is no harder for Him to know what we call the future than the past. God knows the future as perfectly as the past.

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. 10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

This leads us to another attribute displayed in the fulfilled prophecies - God's omnipotence.

B. He Is Omnipotent.

-- Let's be clear: God knows the future not because He is some super-soothsayer, a kind of celestial Nostradamus with a phenomenal ability to predict the future. God knows the future as the One who has ordained and decreed it. Whatever He decrees, He fulfills because He is omnipotent. He is the sovereign ruler of the universe, the One who rules over time and directs history. He rules omnipotently, in supreme authority, possessing all the power needed to accomplish all that He desires and decrees. His power directs the affairs of our entire planet, of the entire universe, to accomplish His plans.

C. He Is Faithful.

-- It is possible, of course, to make promises and not keep them, even when we possess the ability to do so. In fact, humans often fail to keep promises not because we are not able but because we are not faithful.

But God is not like us. He is both able and faithful - always. You can always rely on Him to keep every promise that He makes, to fulfill every plan that He decrees.

Isaiah 25:1 O Lord, You are my God; I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name, for You have worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.

D. He Is Unchangeable.

-- And God's fulfilling His prophecies and fulfilling His promises also reveals to us that He is unchangeable.

Malachi 3:6 "I the Lord do not change."

He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He still is and always will be the God of all wisdom and all-power. He still is and always will be faithful in all He promises and plans.

He still is the God of Christmas miracles.

CONCLUSION

Some of you may know about Karen Kingsbury, that she is a bestselling Christian writer, especially of murder mysteries. Karen Kingsbury has also compiled a little book called "A Treasury of Christmas Miracles (True Stories of God's Presence Today)." As the title indicates, the book is a collection of true stories about Christmas experiences that could qualify as contemporary miracles. Each week in this series I plan to include

one of those stories. I'll conclude today's message with the story about the Jacobs family of Austin, Texas.

It was the Christmas season, and Paul Jacobs was working in his yard, but his mind was on his brother, Vince, who was in the hospital struggling to recover from a ruptured appendix. Vince was 37, with a wife and two young children. Paul paused and prayed, "Lord, help Vince to recover and be home for Christmas." He had hardly finished his prayer when his wife yelled for him. The hospital had called saying that Vince's condition had worsened, and the doctors thought that all of the family should come to the hospital.

When Paul and his wife arrived at the ICU waiting room, Paul's parents were already there. Paul's father said, "It's serious, son. Very serious. We need to pray." Paul's sister soon arrived, and throughout the afternoon they all prayed and waited.

About 5:00 the primary doctor came to meet with them. "I'm afraid I don't have very good news," he said. "Vince's fever is very high, and blood tests show that he isn't responding to the antibiotics. At this point the infection is out of control. There's nothing more we can do for him. If nothing changes, he might not make it through the night. I'm so sorry to have to tell you this. Let's hope for a miracle."

At about 8:00 that evening a long-time neighbor named Sadie Johnson came into the waiting room dressed in a hospital gown. Sadie was in her 70s, a devout believer and very active in their church. They all greeted Sadie and said that they didn't know she was in the hospital. Sadie replied that she was all right and just having some routine tests and was getting some exercise by walking the hallway. Then she asked what was going on with them.

When they told Sadie about Vince's serious condition, Sadie was deeply troubled. "Vince is so young," she said. "And he has little kids. And it's Christmastime. That's terrible."

After a few minutes, Sadie got up to leave and looked at the Jacobs family and said, "I'm going to talk with God tonight and ask Him to let me go in Vince's place. I'd like to be home for Christmas, anyway." Pointing upward, she grinned and said, "That's my real home, up there with the Lord and my dear husband."

The Jacobs were all startled and replied that Sadie didn't need to do that but that they would appreciate her prayers for Vince and that they would pray for her to be ok.

"Oh, don't do that," Sadie replied. "I've served the Lord a long time, and I'm ready to go home, and it might as well be tonight. So, I'm going to pray that by tomorrow morning Vince will be on the road to recovery, and I'll be on the road to the Pearly Gates." Then she turned and shuffled away. The room was silent, but they all felt God's comforting presence.

Vince's condition remained critical throughout the night. But just before 8:00 in the morning the doctor burst into the waiting room with a broad smile. "His fever broke," the doctor announced. "It's almost back to normal. I can't explain what happened. I've never seen anything like it." Then before he left, he turned and said, "Merry Christmas."

The family cried tears of relief and joy and gave prayers of thankful gratitude. As they prayed, Paul thought about Sadie Johnson. When they finished praying, Paul excused himself so he could go to Sadie's room and share the good news with her. Paul went to the third-floor nurses' station and asked if it would be all right to go in to see Sadie. The nurse got a sad expression and replied, "I'm sorry, sir, but Mrs. Johnson died a couple hours ago."

Paul was stunned. "But I thought she was just in for routine tests," he said.

"That's right," the nurse said. "Her heart just stopped unexpectedly. We tried several times to revive her but couldn't."

Paul returned to the waiting room and told the family what had happened. "Do you think it had anything to do with her prayer?" he asked.

No one spoke for a few seconds. Then Paul's father looked up and said, "Well, son, we can't discount what's happened here. I'm convinced that Sadie returned to her room and asked God in all His mercy to take her home and let Vince live. And I believe that's what's happened." And then he smiled and said, "Now, both of them will be home for Christmas."

("A Treasury of Christmas Miracles," Karen Kingsbury)