

The Hope of Israel

What makes the Hebrew Scriptures unique from any other holy book is that they alone can be proven to be of Divine origin.

- God alone has the ability to perfectly foretell the future and the Bible contains a multitude of instances of fulfilled prophecy
- Even though the Hebrew Scriptures were written over an 1100 year period by approximately 25 to 30 different writers, they are in perfect agreement, without contradiction.
- God through His prophets foretold of the coming of a Messiah. Specific details about Him were given so that we would be able to recognize Him at His coming.

What follows is a brief summary of just a few of these prophecies.

HIS GENEALOGY

The descendants from Jacob's twelve sons were known as the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jacob's forth son, Judah, was chosen as the one of whom the Messiah would come (Genesis 49:10).

Of Judah's offspring, David was chosen thus the Messiah would come from the royal line of King David.

JUDAH ➡ Jesse ➡ David ➡ Solomon ➡ Messiah

Genealogical records destroyed in 70 A.D.

No Jewish person today however can prove that he has descended from the tribe of Judah and more importantly, from the royal line of King David. This is because in 70 A.D., Titus came against Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in which the genealogical records were kept. Therefore, for the Scriptures to be fulfilled, the Messiah had to come before the year 70 A.D. so that the Messiah could prove He was indeed from the royal line of David.

(The only genealogies preserved are those in the New Testament which were written while the temple was still standing and were never disputed. These show that Jesus was of the royal line of David.)

HIS BIRTHPLACE

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According to the prophet Micah, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

“And thou, BETHLEHEM EPHRATAH too small to be among the thousands of Judah, OUT OF THEE will He come forth to Me who will be Ruler over Israel; and His goings forth are from the olden time, from the days of eternity” (Micah 5:2, or Micah 5:1 in some translations).

Messiah existed from eternity

Micah also reveals that the Messiah would be no ordinary man. The One Who was to be born in Bethlehem has existed from eternity past. Even though He was to be David’s son, David called Him his Lord.

“The Lord said unto my Lord sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (Psalm 110:1).

And Isaiah called Him the Mighty God.

“Even unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government rests upon His shoulder: and they shall call His name, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6, or Isaiah 9:5 in some translations).

The One who was to be born in Bethlehem was to be God in the flesh.

HIS RECEPTION

“He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we” (the Jews) “hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not” (Isaiah 53:3).

While the prophet Isaiah spoke of His rejection by His own people the Jews, he also foretold of His ministry to the Gentiles.

“...I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou may be My salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

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No one but Jesus has ever been accepted by the Gentiles as the Jewish Messiah.

HIS DEATH

In Daniel 9:26 it says the Messiah would be cut off, or die. The purpose for His death was explained by the prophet Isaiah.

“Whereas He was pierced for our sins, bruised for our iniquities: the punishment was laid upon Him for our peace; and through His stripes we were healed. All we like sheep went astray; we had turned every one to his own way; and the LORD caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isaiah 53:5,6).

Messiah had to die so that the iniquity, or sin, of us all could be placed upon Him. The idea of the payment of sin by one on behalf of another was taught to the Hebrew people by God’s institution of animal sacrifices. When a person sinned, he was instructed to bring an animal to the altar to be slain on his behalf. The innocent animal gave its life for the atonement, or covering over, of the sin of the guilty person.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life (Leviticus 17:11).

Of course animal sacrifices could not pay for sin. Only the death of the Messiah could do that. “For He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of My people to whom the stroke was due” (Isaiah 53:8). Therefore people are accepted by God not because of what they do but because of what the Messiah did for them. Jesus, Who claimed to be the Messiah, said, “He who believes in Me has eternal life” (John 6:47).

The concept that one’s eternal destiny is based on faith alone apart from works is found in Genesis 15:6. Regarding Abraham, it says, *“And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness.”*

But what was the purpose of God giving the commandments? They had nothing to do with one’s eternal destiny. They had to do with the quality and even quantity of one’s life here on earth. God’s blessings and curses on a person were determined by a person’s compliance with the law. If one wanted a long and blessed life, he had to obey God’s commandments.

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An example of this is Exodus 20:12 which says, *“Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land the LORD thy God giveth thee.”* One is rewarded according to his actions, but since heaven is a gift, there is no work to be done to attain it. The one and only condition to go to heaven is to believe in Jesus. He said, *“He who believes in Me has eternal life”* (John 6:47). Notice He didn’t say a person had to feel sorry for his sins, or turn from his sins. He said simply to believe. There is no prayer to be said, no work to be done, no asking Him into your heart. These things will not pay for sin.

Messiah took the penalty for sin upon Himself so that we would not have to face the eternal consequences for our sins, which would be an eternity separated from God.

THE TIME OF HIS COMING

The prophet Daniel foretold five centuries before the time of Christ that the Messiah would come before the second Jewish Temple was destroyed. When Daniel wrote this prophecy the city of Jerusalem lay in ruins and the first temple, constructed under King Solomon, had been destroyed. The Jewish people, including Daniel, had been taken captive by the Babylonians and relocated to Babylon.

While in captivity it was revealed to the prophet Daniel that the city and the temple were to be rebuilt, only to be destroyed again. However, before this second destruction, it was revealed that the Messiah would be cut off, or die.

Since the rebuilt temple stood only to the year 70 A.D., it must be concluded that Messiah came before that year. The temple had to be still standing when the Messiah was on earth for this prophecy to be accurate. And not only that, this prophecy in Daniel foretells the exact year the Messiah would make His appearance.

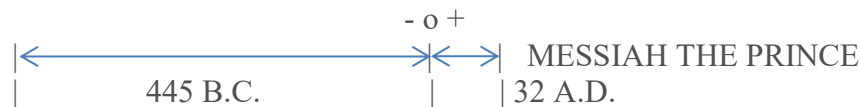
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The prophecy reads:

*“So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem UNTIL MESSIAH THE PRINCE there will be **seven weeks and sixty two weeks**;” (meaning 483 years) “it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty two weeks the MESSIAH WILL BE CUT OFF” (or die) “and have nothing” (in other words, nothing that was rightly His, no kingdom) “and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary...” (meaning, the rebuilt Temple) Daniel 9:25,26.*

DANIEL’S PROPHECY

Decree Given to Rebuild City of Jerusalem and Temple 445 B.C.



7 weeks + 62 weeks = 69 x 7 years = 483 Jewish years
483 Years, x 360 days Jewish Calendar = 173,880 days
173,880 days / 365 days Modern Calendar = 476 years
476 years – 445 Decree year +1 B.C. to A.D. = 32 A.D.

The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was issued in 445 B.C. by Artaxerxes I. According to Daniel the rebuilding was to take seven weeks which according to the Hebrew usage means 49 years. From history, we know that it did take 49 years for the rebuilding. However this was just the first period of time referred to by Daniel. Daniel also referred to 62 weeks of time, meaning 434 years, which would pass until Messiah the Prince would come, and this takes us to the year 32 A.D., the year in which Jesus began His public ministry.
(This calculation is based on the Jewish year which consists of 360 days. Therefore the prophecy in Daniel which speaks of 483 years is equal to 476 years on our calendar.)

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QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIONS COMMONLY RAISED

Objection

The Scriptures teach that the Messiah would bring peace on earth and since that didn't happen when Jesus came, He couldn't be the Messiah.

Answer

It must be understood that in order for all the prophecies concerning the Messiah to be fulfilled, it would be necessary for Him to come to earth twice. The first time was in order to die for our sins and the second time will be for the purpose of establishing peace on earth. The Jews were told to be looking for a King Who would ride into Jerusalem upon a donkey.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; Behold thy King will come unto thee: He is just and endowed with salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9).

How different is this in comparison with the prophecies concerning the Reigning King. For example Jeremiah 23:5,6,

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a Righteous Shoot, and He shall reign as King and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

There is even a prophecy concerning Messiah coming in His glory as the reigning King that plainly states that He had come previously and had suffered. . The prophet Zechariah, writing in approximately 500 B.C., quotes the Lord as saying,

“And I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they will look upon Me, whom they have pierced...” (Zechariah 12:10).

“Pierced,” – translated from the Hebrew word “daqar” which does not mean to ridicule, or scoff at, but only “to pierce, thrust through, and to slay by any kind of death whatever.” Cf. Lamentations 4:9.

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Objection

The concept of God's existing in three Persons is a Christian concept and is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Answer

The first verse of the Hebrew Scriptures reads, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The Hebrew word for "God" is "Elohim," which is a plural noun denoting three or more. The reason it isn't translated "In the beginning gods created the heaven and the earth" is because the verb "created" is a singular verb. that is comparable to saying "they is." Thus the Creator is revealed as the Triune God in the very first verse in the Bible. This explains why God could say in Genesis 1:26, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness..."

Question

Where does it say that God has a Son?

Answer

"who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou knowest?" (Proverbs 30:4).

"Even unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government rests upon His shoulder: and they shall call His name, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6, or Isaiah 9:5 in some translations).

Question

If Christianity is true, then how do you account for all the atrocities committed by the Christian church, such as the persecutions of the Jews?

Answer

The annals of history are replete with accounts of persecutions of both Jews and Christians at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the Christianity taught in the bible condemns anyone who would persecute another person and much of the New Testament is addressed to Christians who themselves were in the midst of persecutions.

There is a vast difference between Christianity and churchianity. TRUE CHRISTIANITY does not recognize the Pope, the worship

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of Mary, the worship of saints or anything besides the worship of God Himself. However the Roman Catholic Church is not the only church that is saturated with man-made doctrine. The concept that one must earn his way to heaven is not found in the Bible, yet is taught by many who claim to represent Christianity. The Bible says that you are saved from hell “by faith and that not of yourselves, it is the GIFT of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

There are other groups who claim to represent Christianity who appeal to the emotional part of man rather than the rational part of man. Some of these groups claim they have the truth and their proof is base on experiences they have had, rather than the written revelation of God. The God Who reveals Himself through the Bible though, is a God Who appeals to man’s reasoning ability. He said, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah 1:18). God expects us to use our minds, not our emotions, to validate truth. If biblical Christianity cannot be proven to be true, than God wouldn’t want either a Jew or a Gentile to accept it. But it is not fair to reject Christianity because of the people who claim to represent it.

Question

Does it really matter if I believe in Jesus as the Messiah?

Answer

If Jesus is the Messiah then it couldn’t matter more. He said, *“except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). He also said, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believes on Him is not condemned: he that believes not has been condemned already, because he has not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God”* (John 3:16,18).

Question

If I do believe in Jesus, will I still be Jewish?

Answer

Yes. You would simply be a Jewish person who believes in his Messiah.

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Question

Could a person believe in Jesus and never let anyone know?

Answer

Yes. You would simply be a Jewish person who believes in his Messiah.

Yes, a good example of this is found in John 12:42,43, which says, *“Even of the rulers many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees” (religious leaders) “they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”*

Question

What if a person were to believe in Jesus and then at some future date stop believing in Him, would he still go to heaven?

Answer

Yes, because a person has to believe in Jesus only once to have the gift of everlasting life. Jesus said, *“he who believes in Me has eternal life”* (John 6:47). And *“the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out”* (John 6:37). A person has to believe only once to be saved from ever going to hell.

Question

What if a person simply believed Jesus was a good man or a prophet, would that be sufficient?

Answer

If Jesus is not Who He claimed to be, then Jesus would be neither a good man nor a prophet of God; He would be a liar.

HIS CLAIMS

Listed are just a few claims Jesus made concerning Himself

1.) Claimed He came down from heaven:

“For I have come down from heaven” (John 6:38);

“I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father” (John 16:28).

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2.) Claimed His ability to foretell the future perfectly proved that He was the Christ:

“Now I tell you before it comes to pass, so that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He” (John 13:19).

3.) Claimed equality with the Father:

“In order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father Who sent Him” (John 5:23).

4.) Claimed He existed before Abraham:

“Before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58).

5.) Claimed He was going to raise His body from the dead:

“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again” (John 10:17,18).

6.) Claimed people’s eternal destiny rested on whether they believed in Him.

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; he who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

7.) Claimed that He was the only way to the Father:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

8.) Claimed that He answered prayer:

“And whatsoever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:13,14).

9.) Claimed He was sinless:

“Which of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?” (John 8:46).

10.) Claimed He had power to forgive sins:

“But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Mark 2:10).

11.) Claimed that someday He would be the judge of all men:

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the

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Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man” (John 5:26,27).

12.) Claimed that none of His words would fail to be established: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).*

Question

What evidence did Jesus Himself give that He was the Messiah?

Answer

He appealed to Scripture as proof. He said, *“For if you believe Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me” (John 5:46).* Also, in reference to this He said, *“Think not that I come to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).*

He also pointed to His miracles as evidence He was the Messiah. He said they should not believe in Him if His works didn't bear witness He was from God. He said, *“If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not” (John 10:37).* And *“the works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me” (John 5:36).*

Matthew 11:5 explains what kind of works Jesus was performing. It says, *“the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.”* These works were a direct fulfillment of the Scriptures. Isaiah 35:5,6 say, *“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.”*

However the greatest evidence that Jesus gave that He was the Messiah is found in John 2:19 where it is recorded He said, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* The writer explains what He meant by this statement. It says, *“But He spake of the temple of His body.”* Jesus was saying to those who were rejecting Him as Messiah that if they were to put Him to death, in three days He would raise His own body from the dead. If Jesus did not literally come back from the dead three days after He was crucified, then He was not the Messiah.

Harvard Law School and Simon Greenleaf

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However, the resurrection of Jesus can be proven to be an historical fact. Consider this!

One of the reasons Harvard Law School is so famous is because of a Jewish man named Simon Greenleaf, who held the Royal Professorship of Law. His book, A Treatise on the Law of Evidence (1842) is still considered the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure.

After he had written this book and while still Professor of Law at Harvard he was challenged by his students to apply his laws of legal evidence to the accounts of the resurrection given by the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This challenge came about because Simon Greenleaf was a skeptic and had often mocked the Christians in his classes. After much persuasion he took the challenge and in the process of his research and investigation came to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the best attested fact of ancient history.

In 1846 he wrote a book entitled An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice.

Listed are just a few quotes from this work.

“If any ancient document concerning our public rights were lost, copies which had been as universally received and acted upon as the Four Gospels have been, would have been received in evidence in any of our courts of justice, without the slightest hesitation.”

“And it is worthy of remark, that of all the investigations and discoveries of travelers and men of letters, since the overthrow of the Roman empire, not a vestige of antiquity has been found, impeaching, in the slightest degree, the credibility of the sacred writers; but, on the contrary, every result has tended to confirm it.”

“Either the men of Galilee were men of superlative wisdom, and extensive knowledge and experience, and of deeper still in the arts of deception, than any and all other, before or after them, or they have truly stated the astonishing things which they saw and heard.”

“It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually

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risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.”

“All that Christianity asks of men on this subject is that they would be consistent with themselves; that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things; and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses, as they deal with their fellow men, when testifying to human affairs and actions, in human tribunals. Let the witnesses be compared with themselves, with each other, and with surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as if it were given in a court of justice, on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability and truth.”

Jesus said, “Search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).

References:

1 p., 2 p., 3 p., 4 p., 5 p.

An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice (Baker Book House, 1965, reprinted from the 1847 edition).