

Messianic prophecies of Jesus' name, birth, and origin

A Series on Messianic Prophecies: Part 2

Imagine being engaged to marriage. The bride to be receives a personal message from an angel that she will be with a male child as a fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant – who would believe her angelic message? A few months later, when the groom to be discovers his fiancé is pregnant, receives a personal angelic message to marry her and that the male child is a fulfillment of a miraculous sign God promised – who would believe his dream message? What would the engaged couple think when they both share their personal divine messages with each other? And what would you think when strangers from the east locate you by an Old Testament prophecy so that they could visit – not you but your infant son and worship the birth of the King?

Note that each parent receives two independent confirmations of the reality and truth of their personal revelation of their son, and in the process, discover that He fulfills, not just one, but three different Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah!

Mary is told that Jesus fulfills God's promise of the King from the line of David who will reign forever. In the Davidic Covenant, some 1000 years earlier, God makes a promise to king David of a Son from his line that will be an everlasting King.

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”” (2 Sam 7:12-16)

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and **the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.**" (Luke 1:26-33)

Joseph is told to marry Mary, because she is a virgin and her pregnancy is legitimate; Jesus is not an illegitimate child. During Isaiah's time, Ahaz (Judahite king Jehoahaz) doubted that God would save them from the Aram – Israel alliance despite Isaiah's prophecy of deliverance. God offered a miraculous sign to affirm Isaiah's prophecy, which Ahaz declined, and that miraculous sign was the virgin birth of Immanuel. Correspondingly Jesus is the fulfillment of the miraculous sign that God promised to those who doubt His salvation and reality.

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isa 7:14)

And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: **Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,**” which translated means, **“God with us.”** And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus. (Matt 1:19-25)

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In fulfillment of God's promise to faithless king Ahaz some 700 years earlier (Isa 7:14), the angel told Joseph that his Son was the Immanuel (Hebrew: God with us) of virgin birth, which was the miraculous sign of God's salvation (Matt 1:19-25). As instructed, Joseph and Mary named their Son Jesus which, in Hebrew, meant "Yahweh is salvation."

She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus (Yahweh is salvation), for He will save His people from their sins. (Matt 1:21)

In speaking of His preeminence and purpose, the apostle John placed an emphasis on the name of Jesus:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, **even to those who believe in His name**, (John 1:12)

Jesus' divinely bestowed name emphasized His purpose, Yahweh is salvation, and was exalted above all other names:

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, **God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name**, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:8-11)

Through astronomical observation, the magi from the east determine the approximate time and location of the birth of Jesus. With careful attention to Micah's prophecy, they know that the Savior was born in Bethlehem. Micah, writing during the 8th century B.C., confronted Judah's covenant infidelity with oracles of judgment (Micah 1, 2 and 3). When Micah speaks of peace (Micah 4), he speaks of the future after Judah has been judged when there will be a new Ruler from Bethlehem. Somehow the magi understood their astronomical observations in the context of Malachi's prophecy.

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity." (Micah 5:2)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

**'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah;
For out of you shall come forth a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel.'**" (Matt 2:1-6)

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Perhaps with the exception of the magi, angels initially play a large role in revealing what Messianic prophecies were being fulfilled and why. In examining the last three, it becomes clear why Joseph in particular is the recipient of no less than three personal angelic visitations while asleep; unlike anyone else, Joseph's actions are being guided for the purpose of fulfilling prophecies pertaining to the Messiah.

Although Herod is the reason that prompts Joseph to take his family to Egypt, the real reason is to fulfill a prophecy. Hosea, a contemporary of Isaiah, exhorted both Northern and Southern Kingdoms to remain faithful to their covenant commitments. In Hosea's reference of the Exodus, Israel was God's figurative firstborn (Ex 4:21-23); Jesus was now the literal Firstborn Son of God.

When Israel was a youth I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son. (Hos 11:1)

Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord **through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called My Son."** (Matt 2:13-15)

The last two dream messages that Joseph received (Matt 2:19, 22) concern his final decision that fulfilled a Messianic prophecy. Although no specific Old Testament prophecy makes a connection between the Messiah and Nazarene, many Old Testament prophecies (Isa 53:2-3; Ezek 21:8-13; Mal 1:6-7; etc.) refer to the despised perception of the Messiah in the context that Jews of the New Testament held of a Nazarene (John 1:43-46; 19:19-20). In contrast to all other Messianic prophecies, this is the only one in which Matthew uses prophet in the plural: "this was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets."

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee, and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. **This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: "He shall be called a Nazarene."** (Matt 2:19-23)

By calling attention to a variety of Old Testament prophecies, angels show how God's word validates Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah. The validation is only meaningful if the Messianic prophecy is fulfilled literally, which Jesus' name, birth, and origin does precisely for each prophecy.

References:

1. Gaeblein FE ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vols. 6 and 8, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House (1992).