

Christmas Convergence

Part 2

Isaiah 7:14

December 22, 2024

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Let us take our Bibles this morning and open them to Micah Chapter 5:2. The title of our message this morning is "A Christmas Convergence, Part Two."

Jesus, as He was walking with the disciples on the Emmaus Road in Luke 24:44, talked about the things in the Scriptures—the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms—that must be fulfilled in Him. Those, by the way, are the three major divisions of Hebrew Bible. The technical name for that is Tanakh: T, Torah or Law; N, Nevi'im, Prophets; and Ketuvim, writings with the most prominent writing in the Ketuvim as the Psalms. Tanakh.

Essentially, Jesus is saying, as He is walking with the disciples on the Emmaus Road, after He rose from the dead, "Why are you of slow heart to believe all that the Scriptures have said concerning Me?" The Scriptures themselves—in this case Hebrew Bible, which we call the Old Testament—were written hundreds and thousands of years in advance, pointing toward Jesus. Jesus is the only human being that has ever stepped into human history to fulfill a script written about Him by the Holy Spirit in the pages of the Old Testament. That is one of the things that makes Jesus unique or special.

What we did in the first hour is we started from Genesis and ended up in Chronicles showing you how the Bible starts off like a funnel. As you enter a funnel it is very large and as you move through it, the funnel narrows. That is what happens as you are moving through the Old Testament. There are countless prophecies given about the Messiah that make it very explicit who the Messiah is. The Nation of Israel, with this information, had no excuse to reject their Messiah. They could have known exactly who He was.

The prophecies start off very broad: He will be a man (Genesis 3:15); He will come from Shem's line and He will be Semitic (Genesis 9:26); He will come from Abraham's line. (Genesis 12:3); He will come from Isaac's line (Genesis 17:18-19); He is going to come from Jacob's line (Numbers 24:17). In other words, He will be a physical descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will be Jewish.

This is why in the Gospels, for example, in John's Gospel, you will see Jesus traveling five times to Jerusalem to enjoy the various feasts of Israel. Jesus was Jewish. He was Hebrew from head to toe. He spent His entire life in ministry within the borders of Israel. He was born there; He died there; He rose from the dead there; and He is coming back there.

The prophecies get more specific: number six, He is going to come from the tribe of Judah. Within Judah, He is going to come from the family of Jesse. From that line He will come from David's line and ultimately Solomon's. I selected these prophecies because they relate to what we are celebrating this week—the birth of Jesus Christ. The birth of Jesus Christ was not some random or coincidental or accidental event in history. It was a time in which countless prophecies came together in a single person, and never in the history of the world has such a thing happened.

Messiah Must Be:

1. A man (Gen 3:15)
2. Semitic (Gen 9:26)
3. From Abraham's line (Gen 12:3)
4. From Isaac's line (Gen 17:18-19)
5. From Jacob's line (Num 24:17)
6. From the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10)
7. From the family of Jesse (Isa 11:1)

Messiah Must Be:

8. From David's line (2 Sam 7:16)
9. Solomon's line (1 Chron 28:4-7)
10. Be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)
11. Be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14)
12. Come before A.D. 70 (Mal 3:1)
13. Present Himself to Israel on 3/30/33 (Dan 9:25)
14. Die in a particular way (Zech 12:10)

The tenth prophecy reveals exactly who Jesus is. Number ten, He must be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). This was written 700 years before Jesus ever walked this earth that Micah was given this 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).*

This becomes an amazing prophecy where we learn that Jesus will be born from the tribe of Judah. This is not the first time that prophecy was given. We find that all the way back in Genesis 49:10. From Judah is going to come One who is going to be a King. He

is going to have authority, and He is going to rule in Israel. Jesus will be an Israeli and He will come from the tribe of Judah.

How do we know that this is talking about God here instead of some other random king? It is because of that word "eternity." Eternity itself is going to come into the world not just through Israel, not just Judah, but from the city of Bethlehem. We know that "eternal" is speaking of God because the word for "eternal" there is "olam" in Hebrew. That word is typically used to describe God. For example, Psalm 90:2 says this:

*"Before the mountains were born
Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:2).*

The word "everlasting" is a translation from the Hebrew word "olam." That is the same word that is used in Micah 5:2—"olam." According to this prophecy written 700 years before Jesus was born, eternity itself is coming into the world through the little City of Bethlehem. On the surface that is an amazing prophecy, because as you go through the Old Testament, all of the action is in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is everything. Most of the history of the Bible revolves around the City of Jerusalem.

Given all of the fanfare about the City of Jerusalem, you would think that the Messiah would be born in Jerusalem, but the prophet says, "No, the Messiah will not be born in Jerusalem; He will be born in a little tiny town of insignificance, two miles to the south of Jerusalem." It shows you the heart of Christ, to come into the world, to be a servant. His birth place was not a city of fame and pomp and circumstance. It would be near Jerusalem, but it would not be Jerusalem. It would be two miles to the south of Jerusalem, in a very humble place called Bethlehem. The prophet, 700 years in advance, pinpoints that exact city as the birthplace of the Messiah.

Now watch this, because a lot of people miss this: it does not only say Bethlehem, it says Bethlehem Ephratha. Why does it say Bethlehem Ephratha? You might be shocked to discover that within the Land of Israel there were two Bethlehems. There was one Bethlehem that we are most familiar with, two miles to the south of Jerusalem, and there was a totally different Bethlehem up north in the area of Galilee.

Do not let that shock you, because in the United States of America, you can pick a name of a city and discover there are multiple cities that bear that name. I was thinking of some of my friends in Minnesota, and looked up one of their cities—Duluth, Minnesota. I have been there several times for Bible conferences. Did you know that there are two Duluths? There is one in Georgia and there is one in Minnesota. How about Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan? I was shocked to discover that there are five Grand Rapids. The one in Michigan, being the most famous, but there is one in Minnesota and in other places as well.

When the prophet says Bethlehem Ephratha, 700 years in advance, he means that it is not going to be the Bethlehem up north where the Messiah is going to be born; it is the Bethlehem two miles to the south of Jerusalem.



That has to be true, right? That is biblical right there. It is that pinpoint accuracy that you are having in this prophecy. This becomes just an amazing piece of data that the Holy Spirit has given us, identifying the exact birthplace of the Messiah. This is why when Herod, who wanted to kill the Messiah, inquired of his own counselors when the wise men came from Babylon following a star to worship the king. Herod, who was the reigning king, did not like the competition. He wanted to know where this Messiah was going to be born, so that he might put him to death. That is why it says what it says in Matthew 2:4-6:

*"Gathering together all the chief priests and the 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 will come forth a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel'" (Matthew 2:4-6).*

As we move through this tunnel, we are seeing very specific information given about the coming Messiah right down to His birthplace.

Some of this answers the question of where, but what about the how question? How exactly is the Messiah going to be born? This takes us to number 11: when the Messiah comes, He must be born of a virgin. How many people do you know that are born of a virgin? That certainly narrows down the field of possibilities for the Messiah, does it not? He will be virgin-born.

If you could take your Bible and go over to Isaiah 7:13-14, you will see this prophecy. Like the Micah prophecy, it was given 700 years in advance:

"Then he said, 'Listen now, O House of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? 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'"
(Isaiah 7:13-14).

Isaiah 9:6-7 tells us that "Immanuel" means "God with us."

When the Messiah comes, there is going to be a miracle: the Messiah will be virgin-born—there will be a virgin conception. The first time this virgin conception is hinted at, as we mentioned in the first hour, is in Genesis 3:15, where a prophecy was given about the Messiah. It says specifically *"her seed,"* which is a very strange statement because the man through the sperm supplies the seed, but the prophecy is *"her seed."*

Genesis 3:15, which to my mind is the first veiled attempt to show that when the Messiah comes His birth, his conception, will be supernatural. It will not be a man's seed that brings Him into existence. It will be some kind of seed miraculously implanted into the woman. Isaiah 7:14 gives more clarity to that when, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit 700 years in advance, he says that when the Messiah comes, He will be virgin-born.

When you get into Isaiah 7:14, there are two issues you have to understand. The first issue is the Hebrew word "almah." If you talk to someone that is a devout follower of Judaism, a Jewish person who understands Hebrew Tanakh, when you show them this verse, it freaks them out. They will go to their rabbi for an explanation.

The rabbi, at this point has not received Christ and does not want this to be a messianic prophecy. He will give this explanation: It really does not say "virgin" in Hebrew. It is the Hebrew word "almah," and "almah" simply means "a young woman of marriageable age, a maiden." It does not mean "virgin."

Let me show you how to answer that. The Hebrews did not use the word "virgin" because they had no such word. They had a word that meant "a young woman of marriageable age." They had another one, "bethulah," that did not necessarily mean a virgin either; it could refer to a widow (Joel 1:8). When you study this word, "almah," you will see that every single time it is used, it could easily refer to a virgin. One example is the young women who sang in Solomon's court. We would expect them in Jewish

culture to be virgins. If you track this Hebrew word "almah" through Hebrew Bible. You say to yourself, "That could easily refer to a virgin."

Beyond that, there is something called the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of Hebrew Bible written two centuries before Jesus lived—Septuagint, called the LXX meaning 70. According to tradition, in something called the Letter of Aristeas, it was translated by 70 scholars in 70 days. That is where LXX, the Roman numerals for 70, came from.

That is how you know that all of these prophecies that I am giving you here are prophecies before Jesus was born. At a bare minimum they were on the books 200 years before Jesus ever walked this earth, because there they are in the LXX translation, trying to get Hebrew Bible read in a Greek speaking world.

The Septuagint translators translated Hebrew Bible into Greek. What is very interesting about Isaiah 7:14 is that when they got to this word "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14, do you know what word they used? They used the word "parthenos" in Greek. "Parthenos" is a technical term in the Greek language that always means "a virgin."

As the rabbis all communicate and say, "Well, it does not really say 'virgin,' it just says 'almah' a young woman of marriageable age." But I can tell you, the best translators in the world at that time—the LXX translators—did not fall for that. They all thought it meant "virgin"—"almah"—being used in Isaiah 7:14. They used the word "parthenos," which means "virgin."

Even more important than that was Matthew, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who quoted Isaiah 7:14 in Greek.

"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'" (Matthew 1:23).

What word did Matthew use when he translated this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? When he quoted this verse under the Holy Spirit" he did exactly what the Septuagint translators did: he used the Greek word "parthenos," which always means "virgin." When people play this game of, "We do not really know if it is a prophecy of the virgin birth or not," then I say, "Nonsense." The Septuagint translators thought it was a virgin birth prophecy. Matthew, more importantly, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thought it was a prophecy of the virgin birth. When you actually do a study of the word "almah," you will see that it could always mean "virgin" in any context it is used in.

Thank God Jesus was born of a virgin because if He was not born of a virgin and He had a natural conception as we have had, He would have inherited a sin nature from his father, because the sin nature is passed down through the father. All the women are saying, "I knew that was true." If Jesus had a sin nature, He would not have qualified to

be our perfect substitute—God only accepts a flawless substitute in our place. If there is no virgin birth, you disqualify Jesus as the perfect sacrifice.

If Jesus had a normal conception, that means He had a beginning point. That is when you begin—at conception. If Jesus had a natural conception, He would have had a beginning point. Yet Jesus is the uncaused cause. Jesus has always been. Not if, but when the Jehovah's Witnesses come to your door, they will try to tell you that Jesus is a created being. He is not a created being. At the point of the Virgin conception, humanity was added to eternally existent deity, not subtracted.

The virgin conception was not an exchange. It is not as if Jesus took off the God coat and put on the man coat. It was not a subtraction; it was an addition. Jesus, at that point, became the God-Man, meaning that He is the only one qualified to bridge the gap between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). Do not get the idea that at the virgin conception or virgin birth, Jesus had His origin. He has always been.

This becomes the significance of the virgin birth. If you say there is no virgin birth, and Jesus had a normal conception that means He had a beginning point. That is heretical. It also means that He had a sin nature, because the sin nature would have been passed down to Him through the lineage of His alleged biological father, Joseph. If He had a sin nature, He would not qualify to be our perfect sacrifice, because God only accepts the unblemished sacrifice in our place. That is why these prophecies are very clear that when the Messiah shows up, He will be virgin-born.

One other thing to bring to your attention besides the word "almah," as you look at Isaiah 7:14, people say, "This could not be some prophecy fulfilled 700 years later because the prophecy needs to relate to the immediate audience. How does this relate to Ahaz and his struggle, which is the focus of Isaiah 7? You cannot just turn this into some kind of prophecy that will be fulfilled 700 years down the line. What would that mean to poor Ahaz in his time period?" This is the logic.

I bring these things to your attention, because these are the things that you are going to hear on Mysteries of the Bible, A and E, all of these kinds of things. They roll out these liberal ideas, and they never bring any conservatives on to counter what they are saying. These are questions that your children and your grandchildren have, and you need to be in a position where you can address those concerns. That is why I am bringing this stuff to your attention.

If your pastor is not going to equip you to deal with these kinds of issues, then what good is a pastor? The whole point of being a pastor is being an equipper. You are coming to Sugar Land Bible Church to be equipped for your ministry from this pulpit. The thing to understand about Isaiah 7 is there is not one crisis, there are two. There is a crisis about Ahaz personally, the king of Israel during that time period. But there is a crisis of the Davidic line. There is an invasion coming that is going to threaten Ahaz, and it is going to threaten the line leading to the Messiah. We do not have one crisis; we

have two. You can see that by just going to the beginning and reading the whole chapter in context:

"When it was reported to the House of David...then he said, 'Listen now, O House of David!'" (Isaiah 7:2, 13).

You will see the phrase "house of David" in Isaiah 7:2 and 13. There is a crisis to Ahaz but there is a crisis to the Davidic line and what the Holy Spirit does in Isaiah 7 as He deals with short-term prophecies that Ahaz could identify with. But then the Holy Spirit says, "Let us talk about the long-term prophecy. There is a crisis to the Davidic line, yes, through this imminent invasion, but I will give you a prophecy here: invasion or no invasion, nothing is going to threaten the Davidic line until the Messiah is born, 700 years later."

This is a strange explanation if you are reading this in English, but if you are reading this in Hebrew, it jumps right out at you because the second person pronoun "you" switches from the singular to the plural and then back to the singular. In other words, Ahaz's crisis (singular) then all of a sudden, there is a shift to the plural Davidic line crisis (Isaiah 7:13-14) and then it switches back to the singular—Ahaz's crisis.

When you look at Isaiah 7:9, you see that twice the pronoun "you" is singular. It is also singular in Isaiah 7:10, but look at Isaiah 7:13:

"Then he said, 'Listen now, O House of David! Is it too slight a thing for you...'" (Isaiah 7:13).

We just moved away from Ahaz to the crisis facing the nation, because the second person pronoun just shifted from singular to plural. The History Channel is not going to tell you this.

"Listen now, O House of David! Is a too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you [plural] will try the patience of my God as well?" (Isaiah 7:13).

In our verse, the prophecy of the virgin birth, he is dealing with the crisis to the Davidic line. What he is saying is: Attack or no attack, nothing is going to stop this Davidic line, and it is going to lead right to the virgin birth of the Messiah.

There it is again, in Isaiah 7:14, the "you" is plural. When you get into Isaiah 7:15-16, it moves right back to the singular, and now we are back to the Ahaz problem. When you move into Isaiah 7:17 it moves right back to the singular.

The two biggest arguments you will ever hear against our position that there is going to be a virgin-born Messiah are: number one, the use of the word "almah." I tried to give you an explanation for that. Number two, you cannot use this as a 700-year prophecy yet future because it does not minister to Ahaz. There is plenty in this chapter to

minister to Ahaz, but Ahaz is not the only crisis. There is the Davidic line crisis. That is why you are completely on solid footing to embrace Isaiah 7:14 with no equivocation whatsoever, that it is a virgin birth prophecy of Jesus.

When Jesus shows up—we do not know His name yet at this point in the Old Testament—He will not only be born in Bethlehem of Ephratha, but He will be virgin-born. It must be that way, because if it is not that way, He had a beginning point and a sin nature. You take away the virgin birth of Christ, and Christianity will start to collapse like a house of cards.

It is troubling to me to hear Christian leaders saying, "Whatever you believe about the virgin birth, that is not that big of a deal." Are you kidding me? It is massive—no virgin birth, no fulfilled prophecy; no virgin birth, Jesus had a beginning point. No virgin birth., Jesus inherited a sin nature, and whatever He did on the cross for us is irrelevant, because God the Father, going back to the image of the Passover lamb, only accepts an unblemished sacrifice.

This takes us to number 12: when the Messiah shows up, He must come before AD 70. What I am going to share with you here are three prophecies that do not only talk about where, they do not only talk about how, but they talk about when. The people that walked the earth in the time of Jesus, in my humble opinion, should have been date setters because they were given enough clarity in the Old Testament to know when the Messiah will show up.

We condemn date setters, in our time period, and rightfully so. Date setters, people that set dates for the end times, set dates for the Rapture. We should condemn that practice because the Scripture gives us no specific date as to when the Rapture will occur. It says to be ready all the time. The Rapture is an imminent event that could even take place before this sermon is over (and some of you may be praying for that to happen), but not so the First Coming.

The First Coming of Christ, with all of the information we are given in Scripture, is a datable event. The Messiah has to come before AD 70 (Malachi 3:1). Malachi wrote these words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit four centuries before Jesus showed up.

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me" (Malachi 3:1).

Who could this messenger be? Could it be John the Baptist? It is John the Baptist (Matthew 11:10). When the Messiah comes, He is going to be heralded by a messenger who will prepare the way for Him. That is fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. John the Baptist pointed to the Lord. Remember what John the Baptist said of Jesus when he was coming: I am not even fit to untie his sandals (Mark 1:7; Luke 3:16).

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple" (Malachi 3:1).

That is a timing prophecy right there. When the Messiah comes, He will come to His temple. What temple are we talking about here? We are talking about temple number two in Israel's history—two past, two future. The first temple was built by Solomon and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and the Nation of Israel went into the Babylonian captivity. When they came out of the Babylonian captivity after 70 years, the Israelites, or the returnees we might call them, started work and rebuilt temple two.

That temple was beautified by Herod (John 2:2). Remember the old men when they saw temple two, they started crying because they remembered what the temple used to look like before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. The younger guys did not know the difference because they had never seen temple one, but the older guys were crying. You will see this in all of the post-exilic prophets and history that we have. They took it and they started rebuilding it. Herod came along and beautified it, and that is the temple that Jesus interacts with constantly in the Gospels.

He went into that temple as a very young person and confounded the religious leaders with His wisdom. That is the temple that He went into twice—once at the beginning of his ministry, once at the end—and cleared it out. He drove out the money changers. "You want to turn this into First Colony Mall? You want to turn this into the Galleria? Forget it. This is My Father's house, and it is a place of prayer (John 2:15-17). It is the temple where Satan, in Luke 4 and Matthew 4, took Jesus to the pinnacle and tempted Him saying, "Throw yourself off, and the angels will catch you" (Matthew 4:5-6; Luke 4:9-11). He was distorting Psalm 91:11-12. This is temple number two.

Malachi says the Messiah is going to come; He is going to be preceded by John the Baptist; and He is going to come to His temple. What you are reading about in the New Testament, as Christ is interacting with temple number two, is a fulfillment of that prophecy.

What is interesting about temple number two is that it was destroyed in AD 70. In fact, Jesus predicted its destruction in Luke 19:41. This was on Palm Sunday when Jesus was riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. This was also a fulfillment of prophecy (Zechariah 9:9).

"When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it" (Luke 19:41).

Why is He weeping over it? Because He knew they would reject Him nationally. And just as God brought the Babylonians against Judah and Assyria against Israel in the Old Testament—to quote that great theologian, Yogi Berra, "It is déjà vu all over again"—He knew that God was going to bring the Romans against the Nation of Israel. Jerusalem in

particular, as discipline for the nation rejecting their king. Jesus saw the temple, about 40 years in advance, and He saw its destruction.

Remember that this is the temple that the disciples were all proud of: "Look at the temple. Look at what Herod has done with it. What a beautiful edifice." Jesus rains on their parade, and He says,

"And they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44).

That is Palm Sunday. He said something quite similar in Matthew 24:1-2 at the Olivet Discourse given on the Mount of Olives. I asked one of my classes, "Why do we call it the Olivet Discourse?" A student said, "Because we get all of it." That is the wrong answer. It is called the Olivet Discourse because He gave the discourse on the Mount of Olives.

"Jesus came from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left on another, which will be torn down'" (Matthew 24:1-2).

We know from Josephus that essentially what happened is the temple in the Roman invasion of AD 70 caught on fire. It melted the gold within the temple, which oozed down between the stones of the temple and dried there. The greedy Roman soldiers, to get their hands on the gold, took it apart stone by stone. That is exactly what Jesus said would happen. You can go to Israel today and see remnants of it.

What is my point? My point is: if the Lord is going to come to His temple (Malachi 3:1), He has to come before AD 70, because after AD 70 there is not a temple for Him to go into.

Did Malachi understand the prophecy that way? Did Malachi's audience understand the prophecy that way? I do not know, but I know through the luxury of hindsight that it is a time-sensitive prophecy. If Jesus comes after AD 70, Malachi 3 cannot be fulfilled because the Romans would have destroyed it already. This is where the Holy Spirit is giving us information, not just about the how and the where, but the when.

By the way, one of the most important things for Jesus to document is that He is from the right tribe—the tribe of Judah. How do you document that when the records of genealogy are kept in the temple? If He comes after AD 70, there is no way to prove He is from Judah because the records have been destroyed. This is what we would call a time-sensitive prophecy.

This takes us to number 13, and this one you will not believe until I explain it. Maybe you will believe it, but I have a hard time believing it, to be honest with you, because it is

so unreal. What this prophecy says many times I just have to ask myself, "Lord, here is my interpretation of this. Is this right?" This is just so overwhelming.

Number 13: the Messiah must present Himself to Israel on March the 30th, AD 33. Talk about time sensitive! Where are we getting this from? We are getting it from the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:25, where God gave a prophecy to Gabriel to give to Daniel, who was in Babylonian captivity. Part of that prophecy is when the Messiah is going to show up.

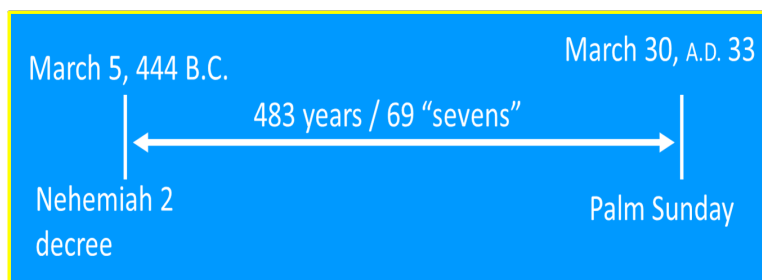
"So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince" (Daniel 9:25).

Notice that He is called the prince because they never accepted Him as the King. If they had accepted Him as the King, He would have set up His Kingdom, but they turned Him down.

"So you are to know from you to know and discern from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be rebuilt again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress" (Daniel 9:25).

We have a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. We can document that in Nehemiah 2, about 100 years after this prophecy was given. The meter started running in Nehemiah 2 on March the 5, 44 BC, and the clock would run for seven sevens and 62 sevens, meaning 69 sevens—sixty-nine seven-year increments of time. Four hundred eighty-three years would elapse from the issuing of the decree—a 483-year time period. Then your Messiah would show up.

When did the Messiah show up? When did He officially and formally present His messianic credentials to the nation? He did it on Palm Sunday, March 30, AD 33. We are dealing with a Jewish clock of 360 calendar days. What this prophecy is saying is: there will be 173,880 days between the decree (Nehemiah 2) March 5, 444 BC, and Palm Sunday, March the 30, AD 33.



God has put me in an environment where I studied under the best of the best on this, Dr. Harold Hohner. In his book, you can find his data, part of his Cambridge dissertation—"Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ." He does a few things that

might be unfamiliar to us. He converts it to Gentile calendar years, and he factors in leap years. He said, "You know what? That prophecy was fulfilled to the exact day."

He was one of my readers on my dissertation. I used to talk to him about this kind of thing all of the time. He was one of the world's great chronologists. He could tell you the split second when Adam got his belly button. He was that kind of guy. I said, "Dr. Hohner, you clearly cheated because you picked those two dates in advance to make it fit the calculation." He assures me over and over again that he did not do it that way. In fact, he did not even expect the prophecy to be fulfilled exactly.

He had just come up with these dates for the decree of Nehemiah 2 and Palm Sunday. He said, "Just for fun, let us see if this fits with Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:25." As he says in his book, he was more shocked than anybody else that the prophecy happened on that specific date.

If he is right—and I do not know of anybody that has come up with something better than this—then what you are dealing with in the Bible is a prophecy that tells you exactly when Jesus would present His messianic credentials to the Nation of Israel. Once you understand that boy, does the Bible start making sense.

This is why Jesus, on Palm Sunday said,

"If you [Israel] had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now have been hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42).

Why would you emphasize the day? Because this is the special day predicted by Daniel, 600 years in advance.

It goes on, and He is describing the destruction of the temple in AD 70:

"And they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44).

Why mention the time? Why mention the day? Because they should have known it; they had a full canon of Scripture, and they should have known the exact day when the triumphal entry was going to happen.

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be required" (Luke 12:48).

These people should have been date setters. Did not Jesus talk about that in Matthew 16?

"The Pharisees and the Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He replied to them,

"When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' And in the morning 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?"" (Matthew 16:1-3).

Why does Paul say this in Galatians 4?

"But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Galatians 4:4).

Jesus could not have been dropped into history at any random time. He was dropped into history on par with the precision of Daniel's clock. That is why, as you get into early Luke, you will see people that are waiting for Him. We have two of them in the Gospel of Luke: one of them named Simeon, and one of them named Anna. They were waiting for the Messiah, and they could probably reason backwards that if the Messiah is going to present His credentials at this date, we can figure out when He was going to be born. They are in the temple waiting while Israel is in blindness—you have a remnant that is waiting:

"And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25).

Why is he looking for that? Because he understood the messianic time he was living in.

"...and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord Christ" (Luke 2:25-26).

The Holy Spirit told him that he would not die till he saw the Messiah. He knew what time it was; he knew his death was soon; and he wanted to see Jesus. He knew the messianic time period that he was in, unlike the Pharisees and the Sadducees, because he had Daniel's clock. This is amazing stuff.

How about Anna?

"And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving day and night with fastings and prayers. At that very moment, she came up and began giving alms and thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:36-38).

Why is she hanging out in the temple, waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem, waiting for the Messiah? Because she knew Malachi 3:1. "Messiah is going to come to the

temple, so I am going to just hang out here until He shows up." She knew the general season when He would present His messianic credentials to the nation. She could reason backwards and figure out, "He is going to be born in such and such a time."

How about these Magi? It is on all of your Christmas cards—Matthew 2:2:

"For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him"
(Matthew 2:2).

Where is the East? The east in the Bible is always Babylon. That is where the Garden of Eden was most likely, and the Tower of Babel was there. When you see East in the Bible, it is Babylon. Here are these Magi coming from the east to worship Christ. Why are they following a star at a particular time in history? Why are they making this journey which is 350 miles? I think they had access to Daniel 9:25 and they knew when the Messiah was going to show up. They knew when He was going to present His credentials to the nation, and they could reason backwards and figure out when He was going to be born—the general time period.

"How did the Magi have any knowledge of Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks? I thought that was Hebrew Bible. What did these guys in Babylon know about Hebrew Bible?" They did not know much, but they operated on faith by what they understood. Daniel had that prophecy of the 70 weeks in Shinar, which is Babylon, 600 years in advance, from where the Magi would come from.

Do you recall when Daniel successfully interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, when none of the other soothsayers could do it? Nebuchadnezzar said, "Do not only give me the interpretation, give me the dream." (And you think you have a difficult boss!) "If you do not, I am going to kill you."

Daniel went to the Lord in prayer, and the Lord gave him the dream and the interpretation. The wise men in Babylon could not do that, but only God can disclose mysteries (Daniel 2:28). When that happened, Nebuchadnezzar was so thrilled with what Daniel had accomplished under God, that he promoted him amongst the wise men in Babylon. Who were the wise men in Babylon? The Magi.

"Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon" (Daniel 2:48).

Daniel was one of the Magi just 600 years in advance. The Magi in the time of Christ had access to Daniel's prophecy, and that is why they are following a star at a particular time in history. They knew generally when the Messiah was going to be born, because it was in their territory that Daniel received this truth.

Couple that together with the first hour, where we dealt with Balaam's prophecies:

*"I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near;
A star shall come forth from Jacob,
A scepter shall arise from Israel,
And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,
And tear down all the sons of Sheth" (Numbers 24:17).*

We went into some detail about this, but this is a prophecy of the Messiah coming from the tribe of Judah—from Jacob—associated with a star. When Balaam had this prophecy, where was he located? He lived in Mesopotamia.

"Because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you" (Deuteronomy 23:4).

Mesopotamia: between the rivers—Messo, between; Potamia rivers. This is modern-day Iraq, the east where the Magi came from. You see these guys coming as wise men to worship the king from a place of infamy. Babylon is a huge deal. They are following a strange star in the sky. Why would you do that? Because that is what Balaam's prophecy said would happen. Then they are noticing that the star, the strange occurrence appears at a unique time, consistent with Daniel 9:25, which they had access to as well, because Daniel was one of theirs who handed down this prophecy to them 600 years in advance.

These guys on all of our Christmas cards are making this journey from the East with two scriptures that they had. If I am understanding this right, they had Numbers 24:17 and they had Daniel 9:25. They said, "This is a Christmas convergence. Everything is coming together simultaneously with these two prophecies. So let us get moving. Let us pay worship. Let us pay adoration to the newborn King."

The Nation of Israel with a completed canon could not figure it out. These guys living in another part of the world with two prophecies could understand it. I do not know if these scriptures were written down or just oral tradition. This is why there was no excuse for the Nation of Israel to reject their King. They did not only have two prophecies; they had a completed Old Testament canon. They should have known exactly who He was, because these guys from the East knew who He was with only two prophecies—a Christmas convergence.

What do we have? We do not only have an Old Testament, we have a New Testament. People are so busy with Black Friday, or the latest whatchamacallit on the phone, the latest app, the latest video game, that we are not going to pay proper adoration to Jesus Christ. The truth of the matter is, the more light you have, the more God expects a reaction. This explains God's disappointment with first-century Israel and how pleased He was with the Magi. Here we are with 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books. What do you think our accountability is? We have what they could never dream of: a complete and totally finished canon of Scripture. God expects a

reaction from this generation. He expects us to rearrange our priorities according to divine truth.

There is one more timing prophecy. Number 14: the Messiah, when He comes, must die in a particular way. That is found in Zechariah 12:

"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look upon Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the weeping over a firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10).

When the Messiah comes, He will be pierced:

"But he was pierced through for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5).

"They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:16).

Question: How did the Jews kill people? They did not pierce them; They stoned them to death.

"Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him" (Leviticus 24:16).

They would stone criminals to death. Jesus should have been stoned to death, but He was not stoned to death—He was pierced. Do you know why He was pierced and not stoned to death? Because of a guy named General Pompeii, a Roman general.

In 63 BC he came into the Land of Israel and subjugated it under Roman authority. When the Romans subjugated a power, they took away their right to execute criminals. "You will no longer be able, in Israel, to execute criminals, except under some very narrow exceptions. We, Rome, will kill the criminals. Thank you very much." There is actually a reference to this in John 18:31:

"So Pilate said to them, 'Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.' The Jews said to him, 'We are not permitted to put anyone to death'" (John 18:31).

You say, "What is your point?" My point is" Zechariah 12:10 is a timing prophecy. Jesus had to come after 63 BC. He had to come after the time when Rome had removed the right to execute criminals from the hands of the Israelis, or else He would not have been pierced. If Jesus comes before 63 BC, this prophecy of piercing could not be fulfilled, because the Jews did not pierce people, they stoned people to death. Had Jesus come before 63 BC, Zechariah 12:10 could not be fulfilled. Isaiah 53:5 could not be fulfilled.

What do you have here in Zechariah 12:10? This is not just a prophecy of how, it is a prophecy of when. I understand that Zechariah, looking forward, would not know all this history, but living in the 21st century, I enjoy the benefit of hindsight. I can look back on that and say, "That is a timing prophecy. That is just as much a timing prophecy as Daniel 9:25. That is just as much of a timing prophecy as Malachi 3:1.

Rome killed people through the horrific practice of crucifixion—which, by the way, Rome did not invent, it is the Assyrians that came up with that, and it is a horrible way to die. Maybe that is the reason Jonah did not want to preach the grace of God to Assyria, because they did stuff like this to people. All Rome did was say, "That is a great way to keep the rebel rousers in line and put fear into people's hearts." So they reached back in history to what the Assyrians did to people, and they brought it back to life in the land of Israel in 63 BC. Jesus would die that way, and the prophecies of piercing would be fulfilled. You see that these are timing texts.

In review: A Christmas Convergence—Christmas prophecies coming together all concurrently around the birth of Christ. Jesus has to be a man. He has to be Semitic. He has to be from Abraham's line, Isaac's line, and Jacob's line from the tribe of Judah, from the family of Jesse; from David's line, and from Solomon's line.

By the way, He has to be born in Bethlehem—not the northern Bethlehem, but the southern Bethlehem. He has to be born of a virgin, and He has to come before AD 70. He has to present Himself to Israel on March the 30, AD 33. Then He has to die in a particular way.

So what? Great information, but why does it matter? Three points of application in closing. Do we understand what makes Christianity unique? You will not find this caliber of Christmas convergence in any other religious book. How could the Quran ever even talk about something like this when it is written by one person? But God, spanning the millennia, revealed all of these prophecies about Jesus in advance to give proof to people that He really is the Son of God.

Number two, are you allowing God to lead your life? If God the Father is capable of putting all of this into motion, do you think you can trust Him with the circumstances in your life? "Lord, I just cannot trust You here." "Are you kidding Me? Look at what I did with My Son."

Number three, have you considered the claims of Christ? To whom much is given, much is expected. God expects a response to this because Jesus ushered in what we call the gospel, meaning good news. He came into this world to bridge a gap between our sin and God's holiness that we cannot bridge on our own. He bridged that gap through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

What He commands us to do is to trust what He did for us in our place, rather than us through religiosity and our own fig leaves trying to fix our problem. His final words on the

cross were: *"It is finished!"* (John 19:30). He wants people to trust in Him. How can you not, given this evidence?

It is our hope and prayer that anyone within the sound of my voice live or archive or video or audio or whatever, would, as they come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, be placing their trust for their salvation exclusively into the God-Man Jesus Christ. I cannot think of a better time to do it than this time of the year. What better time to be born again than in the time in our culture where we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ?