

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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One Prophecy about Jesus

Question from an apologist for the Jews:

Show me one graphic (by graphic I mean 'clear') passage in the Old Testament that predicts Jesus.

Answer:

On the surface this looks like a simple and honest question. However, a bit of reflection shows that it is really neither simple nor honest. Any attempt to answer the question to your satisfaction is bound to fail. Let me explain why.

First, you are the one who will decide whether the prophecy is "graphic" or "clear". Since you are admittedly an apologist for the Jews, it is obvious that you have already considered the various candidates and decided that they would not suffice. In other words, you have already decided that no such prophecy exists in the Old Testament. You are just waiting to see which prophecy I might answer with so that you can "enlighten" me as to why it fails to meet the criteria that you laid out to your satisfaction.

Second, the apostles and Jesus Himself have already named quite a number of Old Testament prophecies of Messiah that Jesus fulfills. Yet these have not convinced you. Thus, neither inspired men, nor God in the flesh has been able to convince you that Jesus is the

Messiah. What chance does an uninspired man like me have?

Of course, the fact that you are not convinced that Jesus is the Messiah does not mean that He isn't. There were many in the time of Jesus who were not convinced even after witnessing His miracles and hearing His teaching. They crucified Him despite all that He did and taught. The hardness of their hearts is no proof of the correctness of their position regarding Jesus.

There were many, even after His resurrection, who were not convinced. Some of these persecuted the apostles and early Christians even to death. Again, this is not proof of their position. It merely shows the intensity of their unbelief, i.e., the hardness of their hearts.

Third, the question, as phrased, is really the wrong question to ask. You asked for a prophecy that predicts Jesus. This allows you to respond to any proposed passage by saying that it predicts Messiah, but not Jesus.

The better question is whether Jesus fulfills the predictions of Messiah. As you know, many prophecies of Messiah are rather general in nature. Any number of people might fulfill the stipulations of a single prophecy including Jesus. However, you can always hide behind the fact that others meet that criteria as well and conclude that it does not, therefore, predict Jesus.

Finally, as alluded to in the previous point, limiting the discussion to a single prediction is problematic.

If I were describing a thief, I would do so by listing any number of physical characteristics that he possesses.

I might tell how tall he was, how much he might weigh, how old he appeared to be, whether he had a beard or not, what kind and color of hair he had, whether he wore glasses, etc. If I got close enough to look at him, I might tell what color his eyes were, etc.

Once the thief has been caught, his defense lawyer might ask for one clear feature in my description that points specifically to his client.

Of course, any one of these features will fail to suffice in most cases. Barring any uniquely identifying features like a tattoo or birthmark, etc. any feature I pick will also describe any number of other people, maybe even other suspects. It is only when all the features are considered together that we can be sure we have the right man.

Similarly, there are many prophecies in the Old Testament about Messiah. Each tells us one of His features. However, in isolation, that feature cannot limit Messiah to one particular individual any more than one feature in my description of the thief can. Ultimately the strength of these descriptions is the entire picture they paint when all of them are considered together.

Most scholars recognize more than 300 prophecies about Messiah in the Old Testament that are fulfilled by Jesus. Edersheim identifies and lists 456 Old Testament passages, "*applied to Messiah or Messianic times in the most ancient Jewish writings*".

Regardless of which number you accept as accurate, no one of these prophecies was designed to carry the entire weight of identification of the Messiah alone. That is like asking which one brick holds up a building. The answer is that there is not a single brick that does, but all of them together get the job done.

To use another analogy, it is like asking someone to show you one specific piece of a 300-to-400-piece puzzle that clearly indicates the picture on the box. This is an endeavor that is bound to fail. No one piece is designed to do that. It is when all the pieces have been put together that the picture becomes plain. Often it is difficult to even see how a particular piece can be part of the picture on the box at all until the proper place for it is found among the other pieces.

The question is not whether there is one clear or graphic prophecy in the Old Testament that points to Jesus. The question is whether Jesus fulfills the many prophecies of Messiah that all agree are found in the Old Testament.

Perhaps the better question is whether you can point to one clear prophecy of Messiah in the Old Testament that Jesus fails to fulfill.

Jesus summed it up best Himself: "36 "But I have a greater witness than John's; for **the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. 37 "And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me.** You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. 38 "But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. 39

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." John 5:36-40 (NKJV)

There are several points here that are relevant to this discussion:

1. The Father has born witness of Jesus by the works that Jesus did.
2. There were, are, and always will be, those who do not believe. They do not have God's Word abiding in them.
3. Those who search the Old Testament looking for salvation will not find it unless they recognize that it speaks of Jesus.
4. There were, are, and always will be those who are not willing to come to Jesus that they might have life.

Is Jesus the Messiah that the Old Testament prophets predicted? Without a doubt. Is there one passage that shows this? No, there are hundreds. Will all be convinced that these are speaking of Jesus? No, even many who witnessed His miracles and heard His teaching did not believe.

Does the fact that not all are convinced mean that it is not true? Absolutely not. The history of the world is full of times when the majority of both men and women were wrong. That has never negated the truth or changed the facts.

The truth does not depend on our opinion or even that of the majority. The truth is determined by God, and we ignore it to our own peril.