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MINISTRIES

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A Nobody Trying to Tell Everybody About Somebody,

Pastor Mark Driscoll

How did people know Jesus was coming?

From Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears

“. . . everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

— Jesus (Luke 24:44)

Usually a good story has a cliffhanger, but for this chapter we will spare the suspense and answer the question right up front. How did people know Jesus was coming? They read the Old Testament Bible. Jesus' entrance into history was eagerly awaited for over a millennium through prophecy. Those prophecies were fulfilled and give us the privilege of seeing God's Word proven true.

Roughly a quarter of the Bible was prophetic at the time it was written. Many of those prophecies specifically pointed to the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, or “anointed one.”

Jesus' own words on this point are even more important. Jesus himself repeatedly said that he was the thread that wove together the entire Old Testament. Practically, this means that Scripture is not rightly understood or taught unless the person and work of Jesus are the central truth being revealed.

Jesus summarized the purpose of his entire ministry as fulfilling every aspect of the Old Testament laws and prophecies.¹ In an argument with some of the most devoutly religious and biblically literate people who have ever lived, Jesus made some astonishing claims.² He accused Bible scholars who had given their life to memorizing entire books of the Old Testament of not knowing their Bibles at all. In all of their studies, they had failed to see that he alone was the central theme of Scripture and they refused to trust in him alone for salvation. Specifically, their hopes rested on the Laws of Moses; they trusted that, through their own pious obedience to God's commands, they could obtain their own salvation through their own righteousness. Yet Jesus said that Moses, who penned the first five books of the Old Testament, was writing about him.³ By saying this, Jesus was showing that even the commands of the Old Testament served to reveal how sinful we are because we continually fail to obey both the spirit and the letter of the law. They also reveal that the sinless Jesus is our only hope. Sadly, as religious people often do, they read the Bible looking for ways to be the hero of their own life rather than reading it to see themselves as villains and Jesus as their hero.

Jesus also models for us a proper use of the Old Testament, by which he alone is the hero and theme. Following his resurrection from death, Jesus showed how all that was written by Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms was ultimately fulfilled in him alone.⁴ According to Rabbi Jesus, the greatest teacher who has ever lived, the key to understanding the Old Testament is to connect each of its points to his person and work. Therefore, in this chapter we will follow both the instruction and example of Jesus

¹ Matt. 5:17–18

² John 5:36–40

³ John 5:39–47

⁴ Luke 24:27, 44–45

by examining twenty-five Old Testament prophetic promises given hundreds and thousands of years before their fulfillment in Jesus.

Each prophecy reveals how God clearly prepared his people for the coming of Jesus. By comparing each Old Testament promise to its corresponding New Testament fulfillment, we can see that the New Testament is built upon the Old Testament. Further evidence is the fact that there are more than three hundred quotes and thousands of references and inferences to the Old Testament in the New Testament.

Most of this chapter will simply be the reading of Scripture. We are trusting God the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture to also illuminate your understanding so that your trust in both Scripture and Jesus are increased. One final note: the authors listed are those the Bible credits. The dates are approximate but accurate according to timelines taught by scholars who honor God's Word.

1. 4000 BC: Adam and Eve receive the prophecy that the Messiah (Jesus) would be born of a woman.

Promise: Genesis 3:15 – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Fulfillment: Galatians 4:4 – “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law . . .”

2. 2000 BC: Abraham receives the promise that the Messiah (Jesus) would descend from Abraham, through his son Isaac (not Ishmael), Isaac’s son Jacob (not Esau), and Jacob’s son Judah (not any of the other eleven brothers)

Promise:

Genesis 12:3 – “. . . in you [Abraham] all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 17:19 – “God said, ‘No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.’”

Numbers 24:17 – “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter will rise out of Israel . . .”

Genesis 49:10 – “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

Fulfillment: Matthew 1:1–2 “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers . . .”

3. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus’ mother would be a virgin who conceived by a miracle and that Jesus would be God who became a man.

Promise: Isaiah 7:14 – “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Fulfillment: Matthew 1:18–23 – “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband

Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)."

4. 700 BC: Micah prophesies that Jesus would be born in the town of Bethlehem.
Promise: Micah 5:2 – “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days [eternity].”
Fulfillment: Luke 2:1–7 – “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. . . . And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”
5. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would live his life without committing any sins.
Promise: Isaiah 53:9 – “. . . he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.”
Fulfillment: 1 Peter 2:21–22 – “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.”
6. 700 BC: Hosea prophesies that Jesus’ family would flee as refugees to Egypt to save his young life.
Promise: Hosea 11:1 – “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”
Fulfillment: Matthew 2:13–15 – “Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son.’”
7. 400 BC: Malachi prophesies that Jesus would enter the temple. This is important because the temple was destroyed in AD 70 and no longer exists; subsequently, the prophecy could not have been fulfilled anytime after AD 70.

Promise: Malachi 3:1 – “Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.”

Fulfillment: Luke 2:25–27 – “Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, 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’s Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law . . .”

8. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that John the Baptizer would prepare the way for Jesus.

Promise: Isaiah 40:3 – “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

Fulfillment: Matthew 3:1–3 – “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’””

9. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would perform many miracles.

Promise: Isaiah 35:5–6 – “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.”

Fulfillment: Matthew 11:2–5 – “Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’ And Jesus answered them, ‘Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.’”

10. 500 BC: Zechariah prophesies that Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Promise: Zechariah 9:9 – “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Fulfillment: Luke 19:28, 35–38 – “And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. . . . And the brought it [the colt] to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, ‘Blessed in the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’”

11. 1000 BC: David prophesies that Jesus would be betrayed by a friend.

Promise: Psalm 41:9 – “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.”

Fulfillment: Matthew 26:49–50 – “And he [Judas] came up to Jesus at once and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, do what you came to do.’”

12. 500 BC: Zechariah prophesies that Jesus’ betraying friend would be paid thirty pieces of silver for handing him over to the authorities and that the payment would be thrown in the temple in disgust (again, the temple was destroyed in AD 70, so this prophecy could not have been fulfilled after that time).

Promise: Zechariah 11:12–13 – “Then I said to them, ‘If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.’ And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord, to the potter.”

Fulfillment:

Matthew 26:14–15 – “Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, ‘What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?’ And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.”

Matthew 27:5–7 – “And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, ‘It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.’ So they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers.”

13. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would be beaten, would have his beard plucked out, and would be mocked and spit on.

Promise: Isaiah 50:6 – “I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.”

Fulfillment: Matthew 26:67 “Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him . . .”

14. 1000 BC: David prophesies that lots would be cast for Jesus’ clothing.

Promise: Psalm 22:18 – “. . . they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

Fulfillment: John 19:23–24 – “When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.’ This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, ‘They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.’ So the soldiers did these things . . .”

15. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would be hated and rejected.

Promise: Isaiah 53:3 – “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

Fulfillment: Matthew 27:39–44 – “And those who passed by derided him . . . So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him . . . And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.”

16. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that, though hated and rejected, Jesus would not defend himself.

Promise: Isaiah 53:7 – “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.”

Fulfillment: Matthew 27:12 – “But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer.”

17. 1000 BC: David prophesies that Jesus would be crucified (hundreds of years before the invention of crucifixion).

Promise: Psalm 22:16 – “For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet . . .”

Fulfillment: Luke 23:33 – “And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.”

18. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would be killed with sinners.

Promise: Isaiah 53:12 – “Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors . . .”

Fulfillment: Matthew 27:38 – “Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.”

19. 1400 BC: Moses prophesies that none of Jesus’ bones would be broken.

1000 BC: David prophesies the same.

Promise:

Exodus 12:46 – “You shall not break any of its [the Passover lamb’s] bones.”

Psalm 34:20 – “He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.”

Fulfillment: John 19:32–36 – “So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’”

20. 1000 BC: David prophesies that Jesus would be forsaken by God.

Promise: Psalm 22:1 – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?”

Fulfillment: Matthew 27:46 – “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”

21. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would die.

Promise: Isaiah 53:8b – “. . . he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people . . .”

Fulfillment: Luke 23:46 – “Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’ And having said this he breathed his last.”

22. 700 BC: Isaiah prophesies that Jesus would be buried in a tomb given to him by a rich man.

Promise: Isaiah 53:9 – “And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.”

Fulfillment: Matthew 27:57–60 – “When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.”

23. 1000 BC: David prophesies that Jesus would resurrect from death.

700 BC: Isaiah prophesies the same.

Promise:

Psalm 16:10 – “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”

Isaiah 53:10–11 – “Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.”

Fulfillment: Acts 2:25–32 – “For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ ‘Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.’”

24. 1000 BC: David prophesies that Jesus would ascend into heaven and take the souls of departed Christians with him.

Promise: Psalm 68:18 – “You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train . . .”

Fulfillment: Ephesians 4:7–9 – “But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’ . . . He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.”

25. 1000 BC: David prophesies that Jesus would sit at the right hand of God.

Promise: Psalm 110:1 – “The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’”

Fulfillment: Hebrews 1:3 – “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . .”

In summary, God’s people knew their Savior Messiah Jesus was coming because they carefully and prayerfully read the Old Testament Scriptures. Because those Scriptures were divinely inspired, they revealed future events surrounding the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ in amazing detail. God alone is both knowledgeable of and sovereign over the details of future historical events. God himself throws down the gauntlet on this issue. For example, in Isaiah 41:21–24, he invites the false gods of the earth to step into the ring with him: “Set forth your case, says the Lord; bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring them, and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come. Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified. Behold, you are nothing, and your work is less than nothing; an abomination is he who chooses you.”

Furthermore, Jesus is the centerpiece of both history and Scripture and, without being hyperbolic, everything is ultimately about Jesus. The presence of clear prophetic promises is one of the unique characteristics of Christianity and distinguishes it from every other world religion and cult. On this point, one scholar has said of the Bible, “It is the only volume ever produced . . . in which is to be found a large body of prophecies relating to . . . the coming of the One who was to be the Messiah. The ancient world had many different devices for determining the future, known as divination, but not the entire gamut of Greek and Latin literature, even though they use the words prophet and prophecy, can we find any real specific prophecy of a great historic event to come in the distant future, nor any prophecy of a Savior to arise in the human race . . . [Islam] cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth. Nether can the founder of any cult . . . rightly identify any ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance.”⁵

Regarding the importance of prophetic biblical prophecy about Jesus, Bible scholar J. Dwight Pentecost says, “some people have given such intensive study to the

⁵ Wilbur M. Smith, *The Incomparable Book* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Beacon, 1961), 9–10.

subject of prophecy that they have completely missed seeing the Lord Jesus Christ in their study of the Word. The Scripture was given to us to reveal Him. He is its Theme. He is the Center about which all the Scripture revolves. . . . The first great result of the study of prophecy is that the prophetic Scriptures prove to us the authority of the entire Word of God. The Bible is different from every other religious book. There is no other book upon which a religion has been founded which includes prophecy within it. . . . There is no greater test or proof of the inspiration, validity, authority, and trustworthiness of the Bible than the proof of fulfilled prophecy.”⁶

Dr. Pentecost wisely connects the nature of fulfilled prophecy with the trustworthiness of Scripture because it is nothing less than God revealing history to us in advance. There is simply no way to explain the specificity and variety of fulfilled prophecy in Scripture apart from the miraculous hand of God at work in the writing of Scripture. Josh McDowell says, “The Old Testament, written over a 1,000-year period, contains several hundred references to the coming Messiah. All of these were fulfilled in Jesus Christ . . .”⁷ Furthermore, the remaining unfulfilled prophecies about Jesus Christ the Messiah will be fulfilled upon his second coming.

For a moment, think about how specific many of the prophecies are (e.g., born in the tiny town of Bethlehem, born before AD 70, pierced side) and the astounding nature of others (e.g., virgin birth, bodily resurrection). The renowned seventeenth century philosopher Blaise Pascal did just that and concluded, “If a single man had written a book foretelling the time and manner of Jesus’s coming and Jesus had come in conformity with these prophecies, this would carry infinite weight. But there is much more here. There is a succession of men over a period of 4,000 years, coming consistently and invariably one after the other, to foretell the same coming; there is an entire people proclaiming it, existing for 4,000 years to testify in a body to the certainty they feel about it, from which they cannot be deflected by whatever threats and persecutions they may suffer. This is of a quite different order of importance.”⁸ The bottom line is that Jesus’ fulfillment of specific Old Testament messianic prophecies is far beyond any coincidence.

After surveying less than half of the Old Testament prophecies regarding Jesus, it is shocking to consider that some people flatly deny that there is even one Old Testament prophecy regarding Jesus to be found anywhere in Scripture. For example, deist revolutionary Thomas Paine said, “I have examined all the passages in the New Testament quoted from the Old, and so-called prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, and I find no such thing as a prophecy of any such person, and I deny there are any.”⁹

As Bible students and teachers, we have the great honor and responsibility to help people see the prophecies about Jesus as proof that it is a divine book pointing to a Savior we desperately need. The evidence is compelling, and the case simply needs to be made.

⁶ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Prophecy for Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1971), 14–15.

⁷ Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict* (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here’s Life, 1979), 141.

⁸ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin, 1966), 129.

⁹ Thomas Paine, “Examination of the Prophecies” in William M. Van der Weyde, ed., *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, vol. IX (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Thomas Paine National Historical Association, 1925), 206.