

THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS: A Promise Fulfilledⁱ Matthew 1:18-25

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you here today. If you are a guest with us, we want to say a very special welcome to you. I'd love the opportunity to get to know you more. You can help us connect with you by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a short form. When you submit that form, it notifies me, and I look forward to following up with you.

Or feel free to swing by our information center located in the fellowship area. There we have a gift we would love to put in your hands as a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. We are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We are continuing a teaching series we launched last week called The Hope of Christmas. Last week we looked at the promise of Christmas foretold. God's first promise of Jesus' coming was made in the garden and continued through thousands of years.

Today we are going to look at a promise fulfilled. So, I want to invite you to take your bibles, and turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 1. We are going to look at several promises, prophecies, fulfilled in Jesus' birth. But we will primarily be in Matthew 1.

ILLUSTRATION: Excited about Gifts

My daughter Eden loves giving and receiving gifts. It is obvious that her love language is gifts. So, Christmas is a time of year that she is filled with such excitement from the moment she wakes up. She gets so excited about what others are getting for Christmas that she can't stand it, she can't hold it in. In fact, it doesn't take much prodding before Eden spills the beans and tells you what you're getting for Christmas. Have you ever been that excited about a gift you were giving that it was hard to keep it a secret? That's my baby girl, Eden.

Well, God was so excited about the ultimate gift He was going to send on Christmas that he started telling people about it over 700 years before it

happened. He began building hope and excitement in His people by giving clues about the time that Jesus would come, how Jesus would come, where Jesus would come, and many other details about his arrival. And this revelation filled God's people with hope and anticipation.

So, today, as we continue our look at The Hope of Christmas, we do so by looking at a promise fulfilled. We are going to look at The Indications, The Incarnation, and The Implications. That is our outline for this morning. Let's read the Matthew passage in its entirety. Matthew 1, verses 18-25.

¹⁸Now 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. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But 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. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

MESSAGE:

Let's begin, today, by looking at...

1) The Indications

When I say indication, I am referring to the specific prophecies that are clues, indicative of Jesus' arrival. The Old Testament is full of Messianic prophecies, foretelling the coming of the anointed one, the Messiah, Jesus. In fact, there are more than 324 individual prophecies related to the Messiah.ⁱⁱ All of these, Jesus fulfilled with absolute precision.

We could spend months going over each one, but I want to zoom in on a few specific prophecies, 5 to be exact, about the birth of the Messiah and examine how they were fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. The first prophecy I want to examine is that it was predicted that the Messiah would be...

A) Born of a virgin.

In approximately 733 B.C., the Prophet Isaiah wrote in chapter 7, verse 14, *“¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign [an indication]. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*

We saw that was exactly the case in the Matthew passage we read earlier. While Joseph and Mary were engaged to be married, Mary found herself pregnant. We read that this was the case prior to Joseph and Mary coming together as a married couple. Therefore, what was conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit.

This presented Joseph with an internal conflict. We learn that he was a righteous and just man, a godly man. Was he to continue to be engaged to a woman that was pregnant before marriage? An angel of the Lord appeared to him and revealed to him what was going on and that the circumstance was actually foretold, predicted, almost 700 years prior.

This situation was an indication that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. But in addition to being born of a virgin, it was foretold that the Messiah would be...

B) Born as a human male.

Also 730 years before Jesus' birth, the prophet Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would be born a male.ⁱⁱⁱ In chapter 9 of Isaiah, verse 6, the prophet said, *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...”*

Again, in Matthew 1, verse 21, *“²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

You can say this isn't really that big of a prophecy. Isaiah had a 50/50 chance of getting that right. True, but the angel made the same pronouncement to Joseph prior to Jesus' birth. Remember, in the first century there were no sonograms, nor were there gender reveal parties.

So, we've looked at the prophecies that Jesus would be born of a virgin and born as a human male. The third birth prophecy is that the Messiah would be...

C) Born in Bethlehem.

In approximately 722 B.C., the prophet Micah foretells of the Messiah's birthplace. Micah 5:2 says, *“²But 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 coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”*

This prophecy is fulfilled in a couple places in the New Testament. Matthew 2, verse 1, and Luke 2:1-6. Let's look at those. Matthew 2:1 reads, *“¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem...”*

Think about the coordination of events by God to fulfill the Micah 5 prophecy. Luke 2 gives us insight to that. *“¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And 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, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.”*

God worked through the pagan rulers of the day to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in order to fulfill this prophecy. So, we've looked at the prophecies of being born of a virgin, born as a male, and born in Bethlehem. The fourth prophecy, indication, is the...

D) Timing of His birth.

God gave His people a clue as to when Jesus would be born. While the exact date was not revealed, clues about the timeframe was. I want to mention a few different prophecies that point to the time that Jesus was born.

Haggai 2:6-9 says, *“⁶For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. ⁷And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. ⁸The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. ⁹The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.”* This is the revelation of the rebuilding of a second temple. The peace and treasure of all nations is the Messiah. So, the Messiah would visit the second temple. This is a big clue because we know

that the second temple was built in 516 B.C. and the Romans destroyed that temple in 70 A.D. So, the Messiah had to be born between 516 B.C. and 70 A.D.

But greater clarity on timing was provided by the prophet Malachi. In chapter 4, verses 5 and 6. ***“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ⁶And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”*** The mentioning of Elijah the prophet preceding the coming of the Lord is the fact that a messenger would prepare the way. We know that to be fulfilled in John The Baptist. Luke 1, verses 13-17 reveals that to us.

¹³But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John [John The Baptist]. ¹⁴And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

John The Baptist was about 6 months older than Jesus and was His cousin. However, he prepared the way of the Lord just as Malachi predicted.

So, The Messiah would visit the second temple and come after a prophet, a messenger. This gives tremendous insight into the timing of the coming Messiah. And this time fits perfectly the timing of Jesus' birth.

Jesus was born of a virgin, born as a male, born in Bethlehem, and at the right time. The last Messianic birth prophecy we are going to look at today is that...

E) Great people were to visit Him.

This is a prophecy that was written by king Solomon and recorded in Psalm 72:10-11. ***“¹⁰May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! ¹¹May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!”***

While it is most likely that the magi from the east didn't make it to Jesus until he was a toddler, a part of the birth narrative this time of year are the kings that not only visited Jesus but also came with gifts.

You know, there is a lot of assumptions we make regarding these kings. We often think there were only three and that they made it in time to see the Christ-child lying in the manger. The Scripture never tells us how many kings came we only know that gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh were given. But nevertheless, kings came from afar, bringing gifts, and bowed down and worshiped Jesus. The account is recorded in Matthew 2, verses 1 and 2. ***“¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men [magi, kings] from the east came to Jerusalem, ²saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”***

We have talked through the indications, the prophecies, about Jesus' birth. Now, I want to turn to...

2) The Incarnation

The fulfillment of Messianic prophecies in Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection points to one conclusion, Jesus is God. Jesus is not a god or like God, He is Himself God. The fulfilling of these type and the detail of the prophecies is not something that can be manipulated by any human.

This week, in my study, I came across an article that talked about the mathematical possibility of someone fulfilling Messianic prophecies like Jesus did. **Mathematician, Peter Stoner, calculated the probability of one person fulfilling even a small number of the messianic prophecies.** He concluded, “the chance of a single man fulfilling ‘just’ 48 of the prophecies found in the Old Testament would be 1 in 10 followed by 157 zeros.”^{iv} In other words, it is impossible for one person to fulfill just 48 of those prophecies let alone all 324. My point in mentioning this is to help us realize just how much of a “God-thing” the birth of Jesus is. And it highlights the fact that Jesus is God incarnate.

When we use the theological term, “incarnation,” it is as Saint Athanasius said, “[a] divine manifestation to us.”^v Jesus is God incarnate, God in the flesh. Understanding this truth allows us to see the necessity of belief in the virgin birth. Certainly an all-powerful God could have sent Jesus to earth as a

complete human being. But, if that were the case, if he automatically appeared, it would have been very hard for us to see how Jesus could be fully human.

Likewise, it certainly would have been possible for God to have Jesus come into the world through two human parents and still be divine. God can do anything. However, it would have been hard for us to understand how Jesus was fully God if both parents were human.

See, Jesus is not a man that became God. That is very important to know and understand when it comes to Christology. Because there are other belief systems that utilize the human aspect of Jesus to teach that humans can become a God. But that is not the case, that's not what Scripture teaches.

But seeing things this way helps us understand the wisdom of God in utilizing the miracle of a virgin birth. It is through this that His full deity would be perfectly married to His full humanity. In this way Jesus is God incarnate, God in the flesh, Emmanuel, God with us.

When we talk about the promise fulfilled, we see the indications and the incarnation. Finally, let's talk about...

3) The Implications.

The implications of these truths are monumental! Three takeaways that I want us to see today. First, the incarnation of Jesus, Christmas, means that...

A) God is willing to enter our mess.

Think about it for a minute. The way God became flesh was in the humblest and messiest of circumstances. Of all the places and ways God could have chosen for Jesus to come into the world, he chose a lowly manger, with teenage parents, bundled up in a stable. Talk about a mess!

Listen, the hope of Christmas is that if God is willing to enter the world in this way, He is more than willing to enter into the messy parts of our lives. I sometimes think that we think that our lives are such a mess that God wants nothing to do with us. Beloved, that couldn't be further from the truth! And the incarnation of Jesus is proof positive of that.

The question is not whether God is willing to enter into the messy areas of our lives. The question is whether or not we will invite Him into those areas of our

lives. We all have messy and broken parts of our lives. But I'm here to tell you that God wants to an invitation even into those areas.

The beauty of a relationship with Jesus is that getting our lives in order is not a prerequisite for Him to come in. In fact, Jesus wants to enter the brokenness of our lives so that He can do the restorative work that only He can do. Christmas tells us that.

The second implication of the birth of Christ is that...

B) God is with us.

The prophet, Isaiah, in one of the prophecies we've already read, said that when the Son of God is born, His name shall be called Emmanuel. Matthew's account quotes this very prophecy. Verse 23 of Matthew 1. ***23"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).***

The hope of Christmas is that even when things seem hopeless, dark, and impossible, God is with us. That's awesome! But there's more. More than God being with us, for those of us in Christ, God is in us.

In addition to the promise of Christmas, God made another promise that speaks of the result of Christmas. Jesus said in John 14:16-17, ***"16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."***

Listen, I don't know what might be weighing you down, but I know one thing. If you are in Christ, not only is God with you, He is in you. Powerful implication of the coming of Jesus. God is willing to enter our mess, He is with us, and thirdly, the hope that lies in Christmas is that...

C) God answers prayers.

Can you imagine all the prayers that were prayed of the hundreds of years leading up to Jesus' arrival? A captive people living in exile so desiring the deliverance of God. For generations the people prayed for deliverance. Have you every prayed for years for something? Imagine a prayer that was passed down for generations.

Now, while God answers prayer, He doesn't necessarily promise to answer in the ways in which we think are best. Jesus was not what the people were expecting. They had built up, in their minds, a different kind of Savior. But God answered their prayer, nonetheless. I believe God wants to answer your prayers as well. Don't stop praying.

CONCLUSION:

The indications and the incarnation have profound implications for us. Wonderful implications.

But Christmas begs a question. What have you done with the person of Jesus Christ? You can't deny Jesus, but you can reject Jesus. Have you trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior of our life? If not, or if you have questions, you can come today and visit with the elders of our church. In a moment I'm going to pray, and our elders will make their way to the front. We would love nothing more today than to visit with you about what it means to trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

You might be saying, "What do I say?" Simply come, take us by the hand, and say three words, "I need Jesus." That's it. We would love to visit with you about that.

Perhaps you're here this morning and you would say, "Pastor Chris, there are parts of my life that are a mess. I'm losing hope. I don't see God working." We would love to pray with and over you this morning. Would you allow us to pray with you? You come this morning. Christmas is all about hope. I'm going to pray, let's stand, and let's respond. [PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: Saint Athanasius, "On the Incarnation," Preface by C.S. Lewis, Translation and Introduction by John Behr, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Yonkers, New York, 2011; John MacArthur, "The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7," Moody Press: Chicago, 1985; Rick Reinckens, "Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled by Jesus Christ," article published by God On The Net, accessed online: <https://www.godonthenet.com/evidence/messiah.htm>; New Testament Christians, "351 Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ," article published by newtestamentchristians.com, accessed online: <https://www.newtestamentchristians.com/bible-study-resources/351-old-testament-prophecies-fulfilled-in-jesus-christ/>; Precept Austin, "Resources Related to messianic Prophecies," published by Precept Austin, accessed online: https://www.preceptaustin.org/messianic_prophecies; Todd Powers, "The Mathematical Probability that Jesus is the Christ," article published by Empower International, accessed online: <https://empower.global/the-mathematical-probability-that-jesus-is-the-christ/>; J.D. Greear, "Christmas 2019: Waiting," The Summit Church, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/waiting--christmas-2019/>; John MacArthur, "Jesus' Birth Fulfills Prophecy," published by Grace to You, accessed online: <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-163/jesus-birth-fulfills-prophecy>; Subby Szterszky, "The Birth of Jesus: A Prophetic Chorus after Centuries of Silence," published by Focus on the Family, accessed online: <https://www.focusonthefamily.ca/content/the-birth-of-jesus-a-prophetic-chorus-after-centuries-of-silence>; Chosen People Ministries, "Seven Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled," published by chosenpeople.com, accessed online: https://www.chosenpeople.com/seven-messianic-prophecies-fulfilled/?utm_source=google_ads&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=search_ads&qclid=EAlaIqobChM1NS2qrzI-wV6hIMCh3f-wZIEAMYASAAEgKNYfD_BwE; Don Stewart, "Did Jesus Fulfill the Prophecies about the Messiah?," published by Blue Letter Bible, accessed online: https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_234.cfm; David Teitelbaum, "Old Testament Prophecies about the Birth of Jesus," published by Christ Chapel Bible Church, accessed online: <https://ccbfamily.org/old-testament-prophecies-birth-jesus/>; Got Questions, "How Many Prophecies did Jesus Fulfill?," published by gotquestions.org, accessed online: <https://www.gotquestions.org/prophecies-of-Jesus.html>.

ⁱⁱ Jonathan Bernis, "How Many Prophecies Did Jesus Fulfill?," article published by FIRM (Fellowship of Israel Related Ministries), January 31, 2015, accessed online: <https://firmisrael.org/learn/how-many-prophecies-did-jesus-fulfill/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ [https://www.israel-a-history-of.com/isaiah-9.html#gallery\[pageGallery\]/0/](https://www.israel-a-history-of.com/isaiah-9.html#gallery[pageGallery]/0/).

^{iv} Jonathan Bernis article.

^v Saint Athanasius, "On the Incarnation," Preface by C.S. Lewis, Translation and Introduction by John Behr, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Yonkers, New York, 2011, page 19.