

LESSON VIII

P R O P H E C Y

Preparation

Gen. 12:3

Matt. 1:1

Acts 3:25

Gen. 49:10

Micah 5:2

Matt. 2:1

Dan. 9:25

Neh. 2:1-8

Luke 3:23

Isa. 7:14

Matt. 1:18

Matt. 2:23

Hosea 11:1

Ps. 110:4

Hebr. 5:5,6

Hebr. 6:20

Gen. 14:18

Isa. 61:1,2

Luke 4:14-21

Isa. 53:3

John 1:11

Luke 4:28-30

Isa. 42:1-7

Matt. 12:14-21

Zech. 9:9

Matt. 21:1-11

John 12:12-16

Ps. 41:9

Mark 14:10

Zech. 11:12

Matt. 26:15

Zech. 11:13

Matt. 27:6,7

Ps. 68:18

Luke 24:50,51

Matt. 1:18-25

Matt. 2:1-15

Luke 2:8-15

Luke 2:25-34

Luke 2:36-38

Markers

1. Ps. 24:3,4

2. Gen. 12:3

3. John 8:56

4. Gen. 49:10

5. Gen. 25:21-23

6. Gen. 48:18,19

14. Ex. 15:23-25

15. Isa. 11:1

16. Jer. 23:5,6

17. Zech. 3:8

18. Zech. 6:12

19. John 15:1-7

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 7. Gen. 17:4,5 | 20. Isa. 5:1-7 |
| 8. Ex. 17:9-13 | 21. Ps. 1:3 |
| 9. Num. 21:5-9 | 22. Rev. 2:7 |
| 10. John 3:13-15 | 23. John 10:8 |
| 11. II Cor. 5:21 | 24. Matt. 12:15-21 |
| 12. Deut. 18:15 | 25. Luke 24:46,47 |
| 13. Gen. 2:9 | 26. Num. 11:26-29 |

Lesson VIII

PROPHECY

Throughout history events of great moments have been foretold by prophets. What greater event could there be than the arrival on earth of the one who was to show all mankind the way to universal salvation? Such an event would not be foretold by a single prophet but by a whole multitude of prophets over a long period in order that the people might be well prepared for his arrival. Such was the case with Jesus. Beginning with Genesis, the Bible is filled with revelations concerning Jesus and the Christ-Truth which he would bring, as foreseen by spiritually minded men for two thousand years. We shall now study these prophecies and their fulfillment in order that we may better appreciate who Jesus really was and thus understand the power and truth of his teachings. Let us keep in mind that many of the prophecies relative to Jesus were things of a most improbable nature in order that their fulfillment might the more powerfully convince men of his divine origin. The fact that the prophecies were made at widely separated periods, yet coincided

in a remarkable degree indicates that the prophets were all looking into the same spiritual realm and voicing what they saw of God's plan.

(1) There are two kinds of prophecy. One is conditional; the other is irrevocable. In Ps. 24:3,4 we read, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart—who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully." This imposes a condition of purity for entering heaven. One's entrance is conditional upon his purity.

(2) In Gen. 12:3 the Lord said to Abram, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This is an irrevocable prophecy and promise that through the coming of Christ as exemplified by Jesus, salvation will be universal.

God is the subject of the Bible and the theme of the Bible is the unfolding of Christ or Truth to man. Christ is in every book and unites them into one Book. Christ is the seed as origin of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Judah, of David, of Mary. Jesus is seed as offspring of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Judah, of David, of Mary. Seed is both origin and offspring.

(3) Jesus recognized that Abraham foresaw the coming Christ. He said (John 8:56), "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it, and was glad." The mystery of the circumcision of the 318 men by Abraham has been mentioned before. Recall that Barnabas (8:11-13) has explained that the T is the symbol for 300 and represents the cross and the letters J and H representing 10 and 8 stand for Jesus.

(4) In Gen. 49:10 we read, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come—and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Shiloh means "peace," and as Jesus was known as the Prince of Peace and was of the tribe of Judah, we can understand the significance of this prophecy.

We have seen how the promise was made to the Jews and Gentiles when God said to Abram, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

We are grateful for the faith of Abraham. Paul says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebr. 11:1). Thus through faith we lay hold on the future. This first step is indeed a true human quality which mediates between God and man and through which the divine reaches the human.

- (5) The same occurred with Isaac in Gen. 25:21-23: "And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder (greater, Jacob) shall serve the younger (lesser, Esau)." Thus Esau and Jacob symbolized the Gentile and Jewish worlds.

- The same symbols appeared at the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh when Jacob gave his principal blessing to Ephraim the lesser, saying, "But truly his younger brother (Ephraim) shall be greater than he (Manasseh) and his seed shall become a multitude of nations" (Gen. 48:18-19). Hence both Rebekah and Jacob recognized that the Gentiles would be ascendant. Abraham was to be a father of many nations. The one nation was Israel. The many nations were the Gentile nations. Hence the Christ was also to come to the Gentiles (Gen. 17:4,5).

- (6)
- (7)
- (8) Recall that in Exodus 17:9-13 we read of the battle of the Israelites with the Amalekites. As previously related, Moses stretched out his hands and as long as they remained outstretched, Israel prevailed. When he put them down, Amalek prevailed. Moses finally sat on a rock and Aaron and Hur held up his hands until Joshua had

defeated the Amalekites. Moses was holding out his hands in the sign of the cross. He symbolized the cross and Jesus, and showed that only through faith in him would they conquer. He rested upon the rock, Christ.

- (9) When the people rebelled against Moses, they were attacked by serpents (Num. 21:5-9), so that Moses was finally commanded to make a brass serpent and put it on a pole. When anyone who was bitten by a serpent looked upon the brazen serpent, he was healed.

- The serpent was popularly believed to be the origin of sin, as in the tale of Adam and Eve. It represented sin. Brass represented judgment. Thus a brazen serpent symbolized the judgment of sin just as a brazen altar represented the judgment of God and a brass laver the judgment of man washing away sins. By lifting up their faith to a mere brazen serpent those who had sinned and had been bitten were healed. This faith in a mere symbol produced wonders. Then how much greater wonders would be accomplished by faith in him who would save them from all sin. The brazen serpent on the pole foreshadowed Jesus on the cross who would overcome all sin bringing the divine judgment. Jesus confirmed this when he said (John 3:13-15), "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up—That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

- (10) In II Cor. 5:21 it says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin—that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

(11) In its lower sense the serpent represented evil but from a more elevated sense, a different viewpoint, it represented wisdom, as Jesus indicated (Matt. 10:16), and the poisonous sense disappeared. Recall that when Moses cast down his rod it became a serpent, when he picked it up it became a rod again. To the evil mind Jesus was

a sinner, disobeying the accumulated traditions of the ages. To the wise mind Jesus was lifted up, seen as coming from God, and the destroyer of the serpent of original sin.

- (12) Moses made a clear-cut prophecy of the coming of the Messiah in Deut. 18:15 when he said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."

- (13) From Genesis to Revelation, the Christ is symbolized by a tree, the cross on which Jesus was crucified. This is the tree spoken of in Gen. 2:9. It is the tree which (14) sweetened the bitter waters of Marah in Exodus 15:23-25.

- (15) Jesus is the Branch grown out of the roots of Jesse (Isa. 11:1). In Jeremiah 23:5,6 we read, "Behold, the days (16) come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely—and this is his name whereby he shall be called "The Lord Our Righteousness."

- (17) In Zechariah we find two more references to the Branch, as follows (Zech. 17:3-8): "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for behold, I will bring (18) forth my servant the Branch"; and second (Zech. 6:12): "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord."

- (19) In John 15:1-7 Jesus refers to the Christ as the true vine in contrast to Israel the vineyard which brought forth wild grapes or sour fruit and oppression, as explained in (20) Isa. 5:1-7. In Psalms 1:3 we read, "And he shall be like (21) a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

(22)

In Revelation we read (Rev. 2:7), "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

The Old Testament is filled with prophecies of the coming Messiah. The New Testament is replete with statements explaining his fulfillment of these prophecies. Many of these were given in the Preparation for this lesson.

Jesus' ancestry was foretold. He was to be a descendant of Abraham and thus of Isaac and Jacob. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25).

Jesus was also to come from the tribe of Judah and be a descendant of David as previously mentioned (Gen. 49:10).

The place of his birth was predicted: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem" (Matt. 2:1).

The time of his birth was predicted. "Know therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times" (Dan. 9:25). A week is seven years. Sixty-nine weeks is 483 years. Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission in 454 B.C. to go to Jerusalem to

rebuild the wall (Neh. 2:1-8). Since 483 added to 454 B.C. gives 29 A.D., Jesus was then about 29 years old. "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23). Thus Daniel accurately predicted when Jesus would begin his ministry.

A startling prediction was the statement by Isaiah that Jesus would be the son of a virgin. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1:18).

It had been prophesied that he would be born in Bethlehem, would be called a Nazarene (Matt. 2:23) and would be called out of Egypt. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hosea 11:1). This was difficult to understand beforehand, but became clear after the birth of Jesus, followed by the flight into Egypt, the return and the dwelling in Nazareth.

As Jesus was descended from Judah, he could not be a priest after the order of Aaron (a Levite). "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4). See also Hebr. 5:5,6; Hebr. 6:20; Gen. 14:18.

His healing ministry was predicted by Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn" (Isa. 61:1,2). Jesus called for the Book of Isaiah and read this passage and told his hearers, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:14-21), thus showing that he was fulfilling prophecy in accord with God's plan.

Isaiah foresaw the rejection of Jesus by the Jews and acceptance by the Gentiles (Isa. 53:3; John 1:11; Luke 4:28-30; Isa. 42:1-7; Matt. 12:14-21). This was a remarkable prophecy and foreshadowed an unexpected development, since salvation was of the Jews but was going to be accepted by the Gentiles.

Zechariah correctly predicted an important event when he described Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:1-11; John 12:12-16.)

The ass was a symbol of sensuality to the ancients. To those opposed to Jesus, he was the product of adultery. To his followers, his birth was the purest possible and the corrective of original sin. To them his riding the ass symbolized his victory over all sin. Both for those for him and those against him, he was correctly riding the ass, but from opposite viewpoints. The ass was also considered an evil omen. Those who greeted him at his entry into Jerusalem would soon turn and call for his crucifixion. Only those who saw him in his true place as God's anointed would remain faithful.

In Psalms is foretold his betrayal. "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. 41:9). "And Judah Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them" (Mark 14:10). Even the price of his betrayal was foreseen (Zech. 11:12; Matt. 26:15) and what finally became of the money (Zech. 11:13; Matt. 27:6,7).

In Psalms was prophesied his ascension. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive" (Ps. 68:18; Luke 24:50,51). We have seen how the prophecies extended through the Old Testament. At the time of Jesus' birth five prophecies appeared to herald his coming.

Matt. 1:18-25	The Angel
Matt. 2:1-15	The Wise Men
Luke 2:8-15	The Shepherd
Luke 2:25-34	Simeon
Luke 2:36-38	Anna

The vast amount of prophecy which the Old Testament contains of the first coming of the Christ indicates the great importance of this event. All the important prophets foresaw and spoke of this event. in order to prepare mankind for it. To some prophets the nature of the event was clearer than to others, hence their prophecies were clearer. In many cases the symbolism of Jesus' coming was obscure and difficult to interpret beforehand. The prophets often spoke in parables either because it was not clearer to them or because they intentionally veiled the real meaning. Jesus himself spoke mostly in parables some of which were quite deep and some of which he did not explain. Perhaps some of the prophets felt that since the people in general paid little heed to their utterances they were not ready to have them made clearer, or to hear more even when this was possible.

(23) Jesus said (John 10:8), "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers—but the sheep did not hear them." Jesus may have been referring to those who misled the people, but he said "All . . . were thieves and robbers." Did he perhaps mean that by failing to make absolutely clear who Jesus was, the prophets had so obscured the facts with symbolism that they had robbed Jesus of his true place in God's kingdom?

In any case, despite innumerable prophecies, the people were unprepared for Jesus. One large factor that weighed here was the general mental attitude of the people. They looked for a king like David or Solomon who would restore the material glory of Israel. When it turned out that his kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, few materialists were satisfied with it. Christianity was too

sacrificial, and remains so to this day for the worldly-minded. From this viewpoint one might say that the lack of preparation for the reception of Jesus' teachings was primarily the fault of the people themselves. Certainly the prophets had exhorted them.

Nevertheless, there were many people of good character, not overly given to worldliness. Why then did they not follow him? The answer is found in a development which has repeated itself down through the ages.

The Law, as originally given, was simplicity itself. It was then followed by directions for establishment of a priesthood, divine services, sacrifices and tabernacles or churches. As time went on the rules and regulations increased and priestly advice, traditions and interpretation were added until the people seldom heard of what the prophets and lawgivers actually had said, but only what the priests wanted them to hear. The vast additions to the originals and the interpretations of them, and the commentaries on the commentaries constituted the volumes of the Mishna, Gemara, Halachoth, Midrashim and Kabbala.

Thus the people were found not obeying the Law, but interpretations far removed from the Law. The original spiritual factors were lost and only ceremonies remained. The accumulated oral and written traditions constituted Phariseeism. Because of Phariseeism the people were unprepared for the true Jesus. They revered the letter which was not God-given, but man-invented, and so lost the spirit.

(24) Jesus quoted the Bible. The Pharisees quoted the Mishna. It was Phariseeism which Jesus fought and by which he was crucified. He was sent to the Jews and came to them as God had promised. The prophets, however (Matt. 12:15-21), foresaw his rejection by the Jews and acceptance by the Gentiles. Jesus continued with the Jews until the final rejection after his resurrection when even the apostles had to be convinced.

(25) Then he told them to preach to all nations beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46,47). Next he appeared to Paul and sent him to be the apostle to the Gentiles. The Gentiles had no layer of tradition concerning the meaning of the Law such as constituted the Church of Judah and could receive the Christ in its simplicity.

Jesus was a Jew, taught by the Church, who tried to reform the Church. He was rejected. He did not set about starting a new church. His teachings constituted a purification of the old and became the basis of the Christian Church. Then the whole story was repeated over again. The Christian Church became the Roman Catholic Church. It became overlaid with ceremonies, dogma and clerical interpretations with a vast priesthood. The original simple spirituality of the early Christians and their healing power disappeared. Finally, among others, appeared a priest of the church, Luther, who tried to reform it. The church was too powerful to be reformed. Consequently, the upheaval called the Reformation occurred and Protestantism was born. Getting the Bible into the hands of the people brought on the Reformation. The people could interpret the truth for themselves, and it had little resemblance to priestly dogma.

Moses brought the Law. Elijah symbolized Prophecy. Jesus fulfilled the Law in its higher meaning and in reference to all those things written in the Law of Moses concerning him. He fulfilled Prophecy because nearly all the important prophecies of the Old Testament concerned him (Luke 24:44,45). When about to complete his work, he appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah thus symbolizing the fulfillment.

Let us observe that first there were the prophecies preceding Jesus' appearance. Next came the prophecies at the time of Jesus' birth. Then John the Baptist bore witness, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36). Later Jesus said that his works bore witness to him and were a greater witness than that of John (John 5:36). His

healing work was a greater witness than prophecy because it was the fulfillment of prophecy. There was no longer any need for signs and symbols of the coming of Christ. Jesus did not symbolize the man of prophecy. He was that man.

It was of such crucial importance to understand his position as the Christ and as God's witness (John 18:37) that after his resurrection both on the walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32) and when meeting with the eleven (Luke 24:44,45) he explained the Scriptural prophecies concerning himself and how he had fulfilled them.

To deny the Christ-example is to deny God's method of salvation and thus to cast aside the Holy Scriptures in their true meaning. Hatred of Christ is the sin of the ages. A proper sense of Jesus as God's anointed, seen throughout the Bible in his proper place, will heal such sin with Love, the power which enabled the Master to accomplish his healing work.

Jesus interpreted the Bible to the people by reading from it and quoting from it. We must do the same. We must read it, study it, and listen to how God has interpreted it to others. But we must keep going back to the inspired Word of the Bible.

(26) The spirit of prophecy is just as available today as in Biblical times. By spiritualization of thought everyone may become a priest and a prophet of God. In Numbers 11:26-29 we read that Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, but that Joshua wanted Moses to forbid them, so that Moses alone would be the prophet. But Moses replied, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!"