### **5 Prophecies fulfilled at Christmas**

*(from Matthew 1 & 2)*

Everything about Jesus is purposeful and intentional not arbitrary, even His birth. The events surrounding Jesus whole life, particularly the circumstances surrounding His birth in Bethlehem, were fulfillments of ancient scriptures written about Him hundreds of years before his parents were even born.

The things Jesus did, the places He went, the things that He spoke, and even the situation He was born into had been spoken about by the prophets and studied by scribes and religious leaders for many years.

This is why when he finally was born, the angels (who have a glimpse into God’s perfect wisdom, reacted so exuberantly with shouts of;

 *Behold, “I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

***and…****“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (Luke 2:10-14)*

They knew of the ancient prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, and they were sent to “herald” (proclaim) this good news.

It’s likely that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law knew all about the prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah, it’s not certain however that Joseph and Mary fully understood the actual fulfillment of these prophecies when they set out on their journey to Bethlehem.

Matthew, a tax collector whom Jesus called to follow him, was originally named “Levi”. It’s not certain, but very likely that his family were from the Levite tribe, which is the only tribe that could produce priests. As such, he was likely raised in a very Torah-observant home, and very familiar with the writings of the Law and also the prophets. He would have known quite a bit of what the prophetic expectations of the Messiah were, and what is required to fulfill them. This is why his gospel, more than any of the others, used the phrase “*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet”* to point out when those prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus.

**Matt 1:18-25**“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **19**Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yetdid not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

**20**But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21**She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

***22****All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:****23****“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).”*

*The prophecy was;*

1. **Isa. 7:14“Therefore the Lord himself will give youa sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”**

The name “Immanuel” (gr. Emmanuel) means “God is with us.” *[not Manny]*

**John 1:14** “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

*“Pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus our Emmanuel.”*

There are many “names” given to Jesus in the Bible, Immanuel is just one of them. Isaiah also said, “He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

The angel said to Mary that Jesus “will be called the Son of the Most High” (Luke 1:32)

The final decision about His *given name* came from an Angel of the Lord to Joseph in a dream.

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matt 1:21)

Jesus’ name means “salvation” and that is why He was born. To save us from our sins.

**24 “**When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. **25**But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name **Jesus.”**

### So, now that Jesus was born. Joseph and Mary are living in a house in Bethlehem, they did not yet move back to their hometown of Nazareth, that would come later, after a brief move to Egypt.

During this time, some strange visitors entered the picture, the “Magi”

We don’t know much about the Magi. We know that they were wise. They were not necessarily Kings, and there were not necessarily three, only that they brought three types of gifts. We do know that they were from "the East," most likely Persia, or modern-day Iran. This means the wise men traveled 800 to 900 miles to see the . Most likely, the magi knew of the writings of the prophet Daniel, who had written his prophecies while living in Persia. They were instrumental in bringing about the next two prophecies of Christmas.

### The Magi Visit the Messiah

**2:1-23 “**After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2**and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

**3**When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. **4**When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. **5**“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, *“for this is what the prophet has written:*

***6****“‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
    are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
    who will shepherd my people Israel.’”*

This is a quote from Micah…

1. **Micah 5:2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
    though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel,**

*(It goes in to say)*

**“…whose origins are from of old,
    from ancient times.”**

Ephrathah is the former name of Bethlehem, or the name of the region that Bethlehem is located. It is also the city that King David was born.

**7 “**Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. **8**He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

**9**After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. **10**When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. **11**On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. **12**And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

**13**When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

**14**So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, **15**where he stayed until the death of Herod. *And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”*

This is how Jesus ended up in Egypt for a short time as a young child, and also how He came to fulfill the prophecy that Matthew sites in Hosea.

1. **Hos. 11:1 *“*“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.”**

**16**When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ***17****Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:*

***18****“A voice is heard in Ramah,
    weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
    and refusing to be comforted,
    because they are no more.”*

This sad and horrific part of the Christmas story is often called the *“Massacre of the Innocents”.* Matthew sites Jeremiah who references Genesis 35, when Jacob’s wife Rachel died during the birth of Benjamin somewhere in Ramah on the way to Bethlehem. Unlike all the other Patriarchs and their wives, she was buried outside of Bethlehem, and said to have a maternal association with Bethlehem.

1. **Jer. 31:15 “15This is what the Lord says: “A voice is heard in Ramah,
    mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children
    and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”**

### The Return to Nazareth

**19**After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt **20**and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

**21**So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. **22**But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, **23**and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. *So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.”*

This prophecy by Matthew is the most controversial, because nowhere in the Old Testament are there references to Nazareth or Nazarenes. Yet he specifically says that there is a prophecy that states “*he would be called a Nazarene.”*

The answer is in the word “Nazar” (the root word of Nazarene) it is sometimes used as the Hebrew word for branch, or to “branch-off”.

1. **Isa. 11:1-2a “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
    from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
2The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him.”**

These prophecies are only a few of the very many prophecies that Jesus fulfilled during His time on earth. Many of them were not fulfilled until His final week of the Cross and Resurrection, and some won’t be fulfilled until He returns.

**Probably the most popular prophecy that we here around Christmas is also from Isaiah. It appears on many Christmas cards, Christmas songs and quoted during the holidays.**

**Isa. 9:6 “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”**

This prophecy of Isaiah is by far the most commonly quoted Old Testament verse during Christmastime. It begins with “a child is born”, and ends with calling him “Prince of Peace”.

When “the child” (Jesus) actually was born, angels heralded His birth by announcing the words “peace on earth, good will toward men”.

Jesus came into a world of widespread conflict and chaos, far greater than we are experiencing today. He grew up under the brutal tyranny of the Roman Empire, and the cruel dictatorship of the Herods. He died, rose again, and ascended into glory, but left the world in basically the same political condition that it was when he was born.

So what changed? Where was the peace?

The Jewish people were still oppressed by the Romans, Herods and High Priests.

The poor were still poor. The prisoners and slaves were still in bondage.

And even those who believed upon Him were persecuted mercilessly, often driven from their homes and some even martyred.

Did anything change?

Yes. Something DID change for all eternity. He brought eternal and internal peace. It’s the same peace he offers us today. Peace with God and the peace within us that passes all understanding.

Also, the peace of mind that comes from the hope of glory. Knowing that because of him, our destiny is secure and our home is in heaven.

This is the peace the world can’t understand. Anyone can experience this peace however, if they allow the Prince of Peace (Sar Shalom) to enter in and preside over their lives, even if they currently live in a land of conflict and chaos.

None of us live stress-free, conflict-free, and problem-free lives.

We all face disappointments, disenchantment and discouragement.

Those of us who have lost loved ones around the holidays can easily become depressed, especially when it seems like everyone is happy except for you.

The great Christmas deception, is that you can create holiday happiness by buying or receiving the right gifts, decorating your home like a Hallmark movie, or having perfect celebrations with friends and family where everything is perfect and nothing goes wrong. That is simply not true, it can’t be done.

Studies show that there is more unhappiness and depression around the holidays than any other time of year. Sadly that’s especially true of those without Jesus in their lives.

But with the Spirit of Jesus living within us we can all live peace-filled lives. It comes by allowing the Prince of Peace to take control of your heart, and allowing Him to guide you into his perfect peace which is way different than the world’s peace.

All it requires is for you to let go of any desires and expectations that were not put there by Him. Then focus…

Focus on Jesus at the very center of your heart, then keep your mind riveted on Him.

**Isa. 26:3** “You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”

It’s the best gift you can receive this Christmas, and the best gift you can wish for others.

**“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” - Jesus**

**(John 14:27)**