

REASON & REVELATION

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

JANUARY 2006

THE PREDICTED MESSIAH

Kyle Butt, M.A.

In hindsight, a good mystery fits together perfectly, like the various pieces of an intricate puzzle that need but one final piece to link the parts that form the completed magnificent panorama. Until that final piece is added, the mystery is virtually impossible to grasp in its entirety. In fact, while the mystery is developing, the inquisitor's greatest challenge is to assess correctly which pieces of information or evidence are of significance and which are the banal elements that add nothing of consequence to the story. Is it important that Mr. Brown forgot his hat at the train station? Does it matter that the water faucet in the kitchen suddenly is not working properly? Inevitably, the astute inquisitor accurately pinpoints those elements in the story that are of great import. The less astute inaccurately labels ordinary events as important, or fails to understand fully events that were of major consequence.

Such is the case when approaching the study of the predicted Messiah, or, as it were, when solving the mystery of the Messiah. Anyone familiar with New Testament writings is quite familiar with the term "mystery" as it is applied to God's plan for the redemption of the human race through the predicted Messiah. Paul wrote concerning this mystery: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before ages for our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7). In his letter to the Colossians, he stated: "I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from

generations, but now has been revealed to his saints" (1:25-26). Paul's epistle to the Ephesians contains similar comments: "[I]f indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery...which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets" (3:3,5).

The New Testament writers identified for us several characteristics of this Messianic mystery: (1) The mystery revolves around the prophesied Messiah and the redemption of mankind; (2) The mystery is one that has been hidden in various ways from all generations of people prior to the time of the New Testament; (3) The various tenets of the mystery are divinely revealed and made known only through divine communication; (4) During the times of the New Testament writers, God revealed the final piece of the mystery to the New Testament writers themselves.

The intention of this discussion is to trace out the various divinely revealed tenets of the Messianic mystery. Upon completion of that task, we must then determine if, in truth, the New Testament writers did possess the final, completing piece of that mystery. We have dealt in other places with the traces of a Savior originating from various sources outside the biblical writings (see Butt and Thompson, 2001). Therefore, since the Hebrew Scriptures are renowned for being the most complete repository of Messianic predictions available, we will focus our attention upon them.

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

In contemplating the Old Testament, Jewish Scriptures, it would be beneficial for us to consider several important features of the writings. First, the opening eleven chapters of the first book, Genesis, do not relate to the Hebrews only, but to the broader scope of humanity as a whole. These chapters describe the creation of the Universe, the fall of man from his perfect state of innocence, the wickedness of man and the destructive, worldwide Flood, and the repopulation of the Earth. They con-

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tain approximately 2,000 years of history, not a year of which necessarily has anything to do with the Jewish nation, any more than with any other nation.

Second, the remainder of the Old Testament, from Genesis 12-Malachi focuses primarily on the descendants of Abraham. Note that the narratives and terms often used to describe these descendants are none too flattering. They are called stubborn, stiff-necked, sinful, rebellious, and a host of adjectives equally as caustic (see Deuteronomy 9:7; Ezekiel 2:3-10; Hosea 4:16). And yet, these descendants of Abraham are the ones responsible for preserving the very Scriptures that repeatedly rebuked them for their idolatrous backsliding from God. Remember, too, that they could have altered and preserved these writings in a more flattering form. From archaeological finds we have learned that other nations surrounding ancient Israel often chose to embellish their history, intentionally excluding derogatory remarks or events concerning themselves.

Why did the Israelites preserve the writings as they did? The answer to this is actually twofold. First, they believed the particular writings that they preserved to be inspired by God, a belief that can be proven beyond doubt (see Thompson, 2001). But second, each of the 39 books contains a calculated revelation describing some aspect of the coming Messiah, who, according to these Scriptures, is not only destined to save the nation of Israel, but the entire world. In fact, the reader cannot prog-

ress far into the Old Testament writings before he is inundated with descriptions of, and predictions concerning, the coming Messiah.

WERE THE JEWS LOOKING FOR A MESSIAH?

It has been suggested that the ancient Jewish scribes, rabbis, and general population were not really looking for a personal Messiah. Eminently respected Messianic Jewish author David Baron first published his work, *Rays of Messiah's Glory*, in 1886. In that volume, Baron wrote:

I am aware also that in recent times many intelligent Jews, backed by rationalistic, so-called Christians...deny that there is hope of a Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures, and assert that the prophecies on which Christians ground such a belief contain only "vague anticipations and general hopes, but no definite predictions of a personal Messiah," and that consequently the alleged agreement of the gospel history with prophecy is imaginary (2000, p. 16).

In his statements that refute the "non-Messianic" view of Old Testament Scripture, Baron wrote: "Even Maimonides, the great antagonist of Christianity, composed that article of the Jewish creed which unto the present day is repeated daily by every true Jew: 'I believe with a perfect faith that the Messiah will come, and although His coming be delayed, I will await His daily appearance'" (p. 18). He commented further: "Aben Ezra, Rashi, Kimchi, Abarbanel,

and almost every other respectable and authoritative Jewish commentator, although not recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, are yet unanimous that a personal Messiah is taught in the Old Testament Scriptures" (pp. 19-20). Baron also noted that only an "insignificant minority of the Jews" had dared to suggest that the Old Testament lacks definitive predictions of a personal Messiah. He then eloquently stated: "[W]ith joy we behold the nation [Jews—KB], as such, still clinging to the anchor which has been the mainstay of their national existence for so many ages—the hope of a personal Messiah, which is the essence of the Old Testament Scriptures" (p. 20).

In his volume, *The Messiah in the Old Testament: In Light of Rabbinical Writings*, Risto Santala wrote: "If we study the Bible and the Rabbinic literature carefully, we cannot fail to be surprised at the abundance of Messianic interpretation in the earliest works known to us...the Talmud states unequivocally: 'All the prophets prophesied only for the days of the Messiah'" (1992, p. 22).

In regard to specific Old Testament prophecies, a plethora of rabbinical commentary verifies that the nation of Israel certainly had in view a coming Messiah. Concerning Genesis 49:10, the noted author Aaron Kligerman wrote: "The rabbis of old, though not agreeing with each other as to the meaning of the root Shiloh, were almost unanimous in applying the term to the Messiah" (1957, pp. 19-20). Immediately after this statement, Kligerman listed the Targum Onkelos, Targum Jerusalem, and the Peshito all as referring to Genesis 49:10 as a Messianic prophecy pointing toward an individual, personal Messiah (p. 20). With reference to Genesis 49:10, David Baron wrote:

With regard to this prophecy, the first thing I want to point out is that **all antiquity agrees in interpreting it of a personal Messiah**. This is the view of the LXX Version [Septuagint—KB]; the Targumim of Onkelos, Yonathan, and Jerusalem; the Talmud; the Sohar; the ancient book of "Bereshith Rabba;" and among modern Jewish commentators, even Rashi, who says, "Until Shiloh come, that is King Messiah, Whose is the kingdom" (2000, p. 258, emp. added).

Concerning the book of Isaiah and the predictive, Messianic prophecy contained within it, Santala stated: "The Messianic nature of the book of Isaiah is so clear that the oldest Jewish sources, the Targum, Midrash and Talmud, speak of the Messiah in connection with 62 separate verses" (1992, pp. 164-165). Santala then, in a footnote,

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ISSN:

1542-0922

Annual Subscription Rates:

\$10.00 Domestic
\$ 8.00 Domestic Bulk
(5+ to same address)
\$16.00 Canada & Overseas Airmail

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230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117-2752
U.S.A.

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proceeded to list several of those verses, including Isaiah 4:2, 9:5, 10:27, 11:1, 11:6, 14:29, 16:1, 28:5, 42:1, 43:10, 52:13, and 60:1 (p. 165).

The prophet Jeremiah contains material that has long been recognized as Messianic in nature. Concerning Jeremiah 23:5-6, Baron wrote: "There is scarcely any contrary opinion among ancient and modern Jews but that this is a Messianic prophecy" (2000, p. 78).

In truth, statements that verify that the ancient Israelite nation recognized certain passages in the Old Testament as Messianic are legion. Regardless of what a person believes about the identity of the Messiah, it cannot be gainsaid that the nation of Israel, through the influence of the Old Testament writers, has been waiting for His coming.

THE PROTEVANGELIUM

Virtually from the first glimpse of human life on the Earth, traces of the predicted Messiah were divinely revealed to mankind. All too familiar is the tragic story of the fall of man. Under God's gracious care, Adam and Eve were specially designed to suit each other's needs and were ushered into the Edenic Paradise, the joys of which humanity has not seen since nor will see again this side of eternity. God gave the first family only one prohibitory commandment—that they should not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they chose to rebel against this lone prohibition, God informed them that the consequence would be death. Yet despite God's gracious warning, Eve's senses were dulled by her evil desires, and she soon fell prey to the deceitfulness of sin, convincing her husband Adam to join in her rebellion.

Into this scene of shame and sin, God brought judgment upon all parties involved. Death would be the consequence of this sinful action, as well as increased pain in childbirth for the woman and increased hardship and toil for the man. Yet in the midst of God's curse upon the serpent, He included a ray of glorious hope for humanity. To the serpent He said: "And I will put enmity between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). This brief statement made by God to the serpent concerning the Seed of woman is often referred to as the protevangelium. J.A. Huffman commented on the passage:

Here the prophecy of a deliverer is unmistakably uttered. Even a temporary bruise, that of the heel, suggesting the

apparent, momentary defeat of the deliverer is predicted: but, at the same time, the deliverer's ultimate and final triumph is prophesied, in his bruising of the serpent's head, which means a fatal blow (1956, p. 38).

The Jewish scholar, Aaron Kligerman, noted that three things stand out in this first prediction of the Messiah, "namely that the Deliverer must be—(A) of the *seed of woman* and (B) That He is to be *temporarily hindered* and (C) *Finally victorious*" (1957, p. 13, italics in orig.). Kligerman further noted that the ancient rabbinical opinions found in the Palestinian Targum testify "that in Genesis 3:15 there is promised a healing of the bite in the heel from the serpent, which is to take place 'at the end of the days, in the days of King Messiah'" (p. 14). [NOTE: The Targums "are interpretive renderings of the books of Hebrew Scriptures...into Aramaic" (Metzger, 1993). Such versions were needed when the major populations of the Jews no longer spoke Hebrew as their primary language. Metzger further explained that the oral Targum began as a simple paraphrase of the text, "but eventually it became more elaborate and incorporated explanatory details." John Stenning, in his detailed article on the Targum, explained that the oral Targum was introduced several years prior to the first century A.D. in connection with "the custom of reading sections from the Law at the weekly services in the synagogues" (1911).]

Of the protevangelium, Charles A. Briggs, in his classic work, *Messianic Prophecy*, noted:

Thus we have in this fundamental prophecy explicitly a struggling, suffering, but finally victorious human race, and implicitly a struggling, suffering and finally victorious son of woman, a second Adam, the head of the race.... The protevangelium is a faithful miniature of the entire history of humanity, a struggling seed ever battling for ultimate victory...until it is realized in the sublime victories of redemption" (1988 reprint, p. 77).

Briggs went on to comment that the protevangelium "is the only Messianic prophecy which has been preserved from the revelations made by God to the antediluvian world" (p. 77).

Here, then, is the seminal prophecy made to pave the way for all others that would deal with the coming of the great Deliverer of mankind. Several qualities of this coming Deliverer are readily apparent. First, He will come in human form as the seed of woman. Second, He will defeat the effects of sin brought about by the fall of

man and the entrance of sin into the world. Third, He will be hindered in His redemptive activity by the serpent, Satan, who will inflict upon Him a minor wound. Fourth, He will ultimately overcome the wound of Satan and finally triumph. In this first prediction of the Messiah, we catch an underlying theme of a suffering, victorious redeemer—a theme that will be fleshed out in the remaining pages of the Old Testament.

THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

The protevangelium in Genesis 3:15 predicted that the conquering Messiah would belong to the seed of woman, taking on a human form. But that feature alone, admittedly, does not help much in identifying the Messiah, since billions of people have been born of woman. In order for Messianic prophecy to prepare its readers for the actual Messiah, the scope would need to be narrowed.

Such narrowing of the Messianic scope can be seen in God's promise to the patriarch, Abraham. In Genesis 12, the Bible records the fact that God specifically chose Abraham from among all the peoples of the world (Genesis 12:1-3). Through Abraham, God promised that all the nations of the world would be blessed, and that Abraham's descendants would multiply as the sand of the sea and the stars of the sky. As Huffman noted, "It was to Abraham, the son of Terah, a descendant of Shem, that God gave a peculiar promise, one which could not be omitted in any serious effort to trace the Messianic hope" (1956, p. 41). For many years, this promise of progeny remained unfulfilled due to the fact that Abraham's wife, Sarah, was barren. In order to "help" God fulfill His promise, Abraham and Sarah devised a plan by which Abraham could have a child. Sarah sent her handmaid, Hagar, to serve as a surrogate wife to Abraham. As a result of this union, Hagar conceived and gave birth to a child named Ishmael.

In Genesis 17, God renewed His covenant with Abraham and instructed Abraham to institute circumcision as a sign of the covenant. In Genesis 17:19, God informed Abraham that Sarah would have a son named Isaac. In an interesting conversation with God, Abraham petitioned God to let Ishmael be the son of promise and the heir of the covenant that God made. Yet God insisted that Ishmael was not the son of promise and that the promise of all nations being blessed through Abraham's descendants would not pass through Ishmael, but would be fulfilled only through

Genesis 49:10—Shiloh

The Lord kept His promise to Jacob and multiplied his descendants exceedingly. His twelve sons and their wives and children escorted him to Egypt to live in the land of Goshen at the behest of Joseph, who had been elevated in Egypt as the Pharaoh's chief advisor. As Jacob neared the end of his rather long life (over 130 years, Genesis 47:9), he gathered his sons around his death bed, and stated: "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days" (Genesis 49:1). Following this introductory statement, Jacob proceeded to address each of his sons and bestow blessings (or in some cases, curses) on his descendants.

In the midst of his final speech, in his blessing on Judah, Jacob stated: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people" (Genesis 49:10). The Messianic nature of this statement has long been recognized and discussed in ancient Jewish circles. As previously stated, David Baron wrote: "With regard to this prophecy, the first thing I want to point out is that **all antiquity agrees in interpreting it of a personal Messiah**. This is the view of the LXX. Version; the Targumim of Onkelos, Yonathan, and Jerusalem; the Talmud; the Sohar; the ancient book of 'Bereshith Rabba;' and among modern Jewish commentators, even Rashi, who says, 'Until Shiloh come, that is King Messiah, Whose is the kingdom'" (2000, p. 258, emp. added). Aaron Kligerman added: "The rabbis of old, though not agreeing with each other as to the meaning of the root Shiloh, were almost unanimous in applying the term to the Messiah" (1957, pp. 19-20). Santala, in his discussion of several of the oldest Jewish documents available, wrote:

Targum Onqulos says of Judah's scepter that it will not depart "*until the Messiah comes, he who has the power to reign.*" Targum Jonathan puts it that the verse refers to "*the age of the Messiah-King, the King who will come as the youngest of his children.*" Targum Yerushalmi speaks of the "time" when "*the Messiah-King will come*" (1992, p. 50, italics in orig.).

Much commentary and debate surrounds the "Shiloh" prophecy found in Genesis 49:10. It is often viewed as an indication of the time that the Messiah should arrive on the scene. As can be deduced from Kligerman's quote, the actual origin and exact meaning of the word Shiloh are disputed in many scholarly circles. Yet, de-

Isaac. God said: "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year" (Genesis 17:21). James Smith, in writing about God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham, noted that this promise "has Messianic implications. Both the Church Fathers and Jewish Rabbis so interpreted it" (1993, p. 47). Aaron Kligerman concurred when he wrote about God's promise to Abraham: "This is more than the promise of 'The Hope of a Prosperous Era.' It is a promise of the coming of a 'Personal Messiah'" (1957, pp. 17-18). At this point in human history, then, the Messianic implications fall to the descendants of Isaac. It is important not to miss the significance of the Messianic hope through Abraham and Isaac. The scope of the Messiah has been narrowed from all other peoples and nations of the world, to a single nomadic family. And yet, not just to Abraham's family in its entirety, but to only one of Abraham's sons—Isaac.

But the picture becomes even clearer with the birth of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Because of abnormalities with her pregnancy, Rebekah inquired of the Lord about her situation. To answer her questions, the Lord said: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). Concerning this passage, Briggs noted: "This prediction breaks up the seed of Isaac into two nations, assigns the headship with the blessing to Jacob, and makes Edom subject to him" (1988, p. 90). The fact that the promised Messiah would come through Jacob's descendants becomes increasingly clear throughout the Genesis narrative that tells the stories of Jacob and Esau. God confirmed the promise to Jacob in Genesis 28:14, when He said to the patriarch: "Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and **in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed**" (emp. added). The picture of the Messiah continues to become increasingly focused: The seed of woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of Isaac, the seed of Jacob.

TWO MESSIAHS:

A SUFFERING SERVANT AND REIGNING KING

Throughout the Old Testament, various Messianic passages refer to a majestic, glorious King who will reign over a never-ending kingdom. Yet, at the same time, other Messianic prophecies depict

a suffering Messiah who will bear the guilt and sin of the entire world. Because these two aspects of Messianic prophecy seem contradictory, many in the ancient Jewish community could not understand how such diverse prophetic sentiments could be fulfilled in a single individual. Due to this conundrum, ancient and modern Jews have posited the idea that two Messiahs would come: one would be the suffering Servant, while the other would be the glorious King.

Concerning this separation of the Messiah into two different individuals, John Ankerberg and his colleagues John Weldon and Walter Kaiser wrote:

[T]hey (early Jewish rabbis—KB) could not reconcile the statements that so clearly spoke of a suffering and dying Messiah with those verses in other passages that spoke of a triumphant and victorious Messiah. What is important to note is that they did recognize that both pictures somehow applied to the Messiah. But they assumed it was impossible to reconcile both views in one person. Rather than seeing one Messiah in two different roles, they saw two Messiahs—the suffering and dying Messiah, called "Messiah ben Joseph," and the victorious conquering Messiah, called "Messiah ben David" (1989, pp. 57-58).

Jewish rabbi Robert M. Cohen stated:

The rabbis saw that scripture portrayed two different pictures of King Messiah. One would conquer and reign and bring Israel back to the land by world peace and bring the fullness of obedience to the Torah. They called him Messiah ben David. The other picture is of a servant who would die and bear Israel's sin that they refer to as the "leprous one" based on Isaiah 53 (n.d.; also see Parsons, 2003-2006).

It is evident, from the rabbinical view of two Messiahs, that the themes of suffering and regal authority were so vividly portrayed in Old Testament Messianic prophecy that both themes demanded fulfillment. To suggest two Messiahs provided such a fulfillment. However, the dual Messianic idea failed to comprehend the actual nature of Messianic prophecy, and missed a primary facet of the Messianic personality: that the Messiah would be **both** a suffering Servant and a majestic King. As Huffman rightly observed: "The theme of Messianism is composed of two inseparable strands or threads—the scarlet and the golden, or the suffering and the reigning, or the priestly and the royal" (1956, p. 7). To misunderstand or miss either of these two interwoven threads would be to miss the Messiah completely.

Pangea and the Flood

Kyle Butt, M.A.

Anyone who has taken time to examine a globe in detail has probably noticed that the continents look like they could fit together. In fact, the idea that the continents once joined together in a single land mass is standard teaching in most middle-school and high-school textbooks. This massive land conglomeration is known to most as Pangea (also spelled Pangaea). Evolutionary-based science books suggest that many millions of years ago, Pangea existed as the main land feature on the globe. Due to rather slow processes, known as continental drift, the continents lazily drifted apart over millions of years. In *Focus on Earth Science*, published by Merrill, the following typical explanation is given for a facet of the plate tectonic theory:

The average rate of spreading at the East Pacific rise is 4 cm/year. The Maximum distance from the ridge to any trench is 10 000 km. If the spreading rate is constant, then no existing Pacific Ocean rock should be older than 250 million years (Hesser and Leach, 1989, p. 449).

Several problems exist with the typical evolutionary explanation. There is some legitimate evidence, however, that the continents did, at one time, fit together. Many rock types and formations abruptly end on the coast of one continent and just as abruptly begin on the coast of another continent. In fact, well-known creationists have used the idea of Pangea in their explanatory models of certain geologic phenomena (see Baumgardner, 1994). At present, even though the idea is far from proven, there seems to be no scientific evidence that overwhelmingly suggests that Pangea could not have been an option. Nor is there any biblical evidence that would rule out the possibility. Certain biblical passages even hint that such might have been the case. Genesis 1:9-10 states: "Then God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear,' and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas." It is not an unreasonable possibility to suggest that if the water was in one place, then the exposed land mass was as well.

The fundamental problem with most evolutionary explanations of Pangea's separation comes in their application of uniformitarian principles. Since we see the continents drifting only a few centimeters a year at present, then, according to uniformitarian thinkers, that must be the rate at which they have drifted for millions of years. This explanation fails to account for geologically catastrophic events on a massive scale. In truth, while the continents may have been connected in the past, they did not drift lazily apart over hundreds of millions of years.

In the April 23, 1999 issue of *Science*, Paul R. Renne and his team of researchers put forth the idea that a huge flow of magma and volcanic activity began the process that "drove the land mass [Pangea—KB] apart to create the Atlantic Ocean, at the same time dispersing evidence of the eruption widely on the margins of four continents" (Sanders, 1999). In the opening paragraph of their article, Renne and his colleagues discuss "the Central Atlantic Magmatic Province (CAMP), which is associated with the disruption of Pangea and the opening of the central Atlantic Ocean" (Marzoli, Renne, et al., 1999, p. 616). Their thesis was that, due to new "high-precision geochronological analysis" components of CAMP can be related "to a single brief magmatic episode...with an estimated original extent of volcanism over an area at least $4.5 \times 10^6 \text{ Km}^2$ " (Marzoli, Renne, et al., p. 616). In layman's terms, the split of Pangea began to take place in one huge, cataclysmic volcanic eruption.

While Renne and his colleagues most likely would not endorse the biblical Flood model, their findings fit perfectly with the idea that the geological activity during the Flood could have greatly accelerated the rate at which the continents spread. In the Genesis account of the Flood, "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up" (7:11). This statement has long been recognized as evidence of heavy volcanic and magmatic activity during the Flood. The force and magnitude of the global Flood, coupled with the ensuing volcanic and geologically cataclysmic activity, would supply adequate causes for accelerated rates of continental drift.

Was there ever a single land mass known as Pangea? It is possible. But if there was, the uniformitarian model of continental drift provides an inadequate explanation for its separation. The catastrophic events surrounding the global Flood supply a much more feasible model for the separation of Pangea.

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Q Are you aware of the movie that is scheduled for release next summer called *The Beast*? I heard it was filmed in an effort to convince people that Jesus never lived. Is that true?

A According to the movie's Web site (www.thebeastmovie.com), *The Beast* is scheduled to be released in theaters worldwide on June 6, 2006 (or 6/6/06—which I can assure you is no accident). And, yes, it does appear that the movie's main focus will be to persuade audiences of the alleged "fact" that "Jesus Christ never existed." It is a story about a young person named Danielle whose father mysteriously disappears after stumbling across "a cover-up of Christianity's best-kept secret: That Jesus Christ never existed." Brian Flemming, the movie's director, supposedly dives "into factual territory" that is "well-explored by scholars but largely hidden from the view of the public" (<http://www.thebeastmovie.com/about/index.html>). Although *The Beast* is listed as "fictional," based upon the movie's Web site, the director's aim will be to persuade his audiences that Jesus is equally fictional.

While I have not seen the movie (and certainly do not encourage Christians who are simply seeking to be entertained to view and support such an anti-Christian film, which

will simply poke more fun at "fundamentalist Christians"), I can only imagine how the many sources that do testify to Jesus' historicity will be critiqued. The historically reliable (not to mention inspired) New Testament documents likely will be dismissed out of hand. Even though every one of the New Testament writers testified to the reality of Christ, they must be rejected as liars or lunatics. Similarly, statements about Jesus from such reputable first and early second-century historians as Josephus, Tacitus, and Seutonius will also have to be somehow discounted (if even mentioned at all).

Who knows if this movie will even make it into theaters next summer? (My prayer is that it will not.) But, if it does, Christians need not be alarmed about some new piece of propaganda that supposedly proves Jesus never lived. When all of the facts are gathered, the honest individual will come to the same conclusion that the French humanist Ernest Renan came to more than 100 years ago: "[A]ll history is incomprehensible without him [Jesus—EL]" (http://www.lexilogos.com/document/renan/life_jesus.htm).

By the way, Apologetics Press is scheduled to release a new book on the historicity and deity of Christ in the spring of 2006—some time **before** the release of *The Beast*.

Eric Lyons

IN THE NEWS

Americans have been swapping things ever since Native Americans began trading items with the Pilgrims who landed on Plymouth Rock nearly 400 years ago. Americans customarily have swapped everything from phone numbers to cars. Recently, however, a new kind of swapping took place at the University of Texas in San Antonio. The student organization known as Atheist Agenda ran a "Smut for Smut" campaign in which religious materials, notably Bibles, were exchanged for pornography. UTSA students were asked to exchange the very book that condemns fornication, adultery, and the lust of the flesh, for pornography labeled from 0 to 5 (*Playboy* magazine, which was labeled as zero, to "hard core" porn).

In an interview this past month with Tucker Carlson of MSNBC, the president of Atheist Agenda, Thomas Jackson, stated:

Well, first of all, you know, pornography gets a lot of negative press, and it's smut. A lot of it really is. And we wanted to make the comparison between that and the smut that is religious scripture or a lot of it, you know.... [W]hat we're doing is trading something that's **very, very bad** for something that's only moderately bad (2005, emp. added).

Admittedly, Bibles were not the only kind of religious text swapped, but apparently most

books that the student-led atheist organization received were Bibles.

When asked why the group was sponsoring the "Smut for Smut" program, Jackson said: "All right. Well, we have Bronze Aged tribal nonsense, these things written by people in tents ages ago, and we're using this to renounce science standards in our classrooms in America. We're using it to kind of influence our political agenda" (2005). He later added: "Religious texts actually contradict each other. If you read the Bible, it contradicts itself on nearly every page" (2005).

Aside from the fact that the Bible writers were extremely accurate (and inspired!) in their writings (see Thompson, 2001), and never contradicted each other, the situation at UTSA is just one more sad indication of the blasphemous, anti-Christian sentiment that has infiltrated many college campuses. Parents, beware when you send off your 18-year-olds to get an "education."

Eric Lyons

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R&R RESOURCES

spite the controversy in reference to this prophecy, the one aspect of it that stands out is the central idea that this is a Messianic prophecy. As such, it narrows the identity of the Messiah even further to a descendant, not just of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to the house of Judah.

The Son of David

Of all the monarchs that possessed the throne of Israel, none is as storied as King David. From his youth he proved himself to be a courageous, valiant warrior who trusted in the Lord. He was described as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13: 14). He wrote many of the Psalms, and ushered in a united kingdom that paved the way for the majestic reign of his son, Solomon.

David's relationship to the Messiah is a rather interesting one. First, Jewish antiquity recognized the fact that the Messiah would be the Son of David. Santala commented: "*Tradition ascribes 73 of the 150 psalms to King David.* In the Rabbinic literature the Messiah is constantly referred to as the 'Son of David.' For this reason, everywhere the future blessing of the house of David is described, the Sages saw Messianic material" (1992, p. 109, italics in orig.).

Such Messianic sentiments in regard to David find their origin in the promise made by God to David through the prophet Nathan. In 2 Samuel 7, the text narrates the events that lead to this promise. David had become a great king and his reign had spread far and wide. Due to his love for the Lord, he wanted to show honor to God by building a glorious temple in which the Ark of the Covenant could be housed. He mentioned his idea to the prophet Nathan, who immediately encouraged the building plans. But soon after Nathan had told David to do all that was in his heart, God conveyed to Nathan that He did not want David to build a temple. Instead, God would commission David's son, Solomon, to construct the magnificent edifice. Yet, in God's message to David, He promised: "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Samuel 7:16).

In the book of Psalms, the promise of David's descendant reigning over an eternal Kingdom is expanded and given more substance. Psalm 89 contains several Messianic aspects, not the least of which is the following statement: "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My Servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations'" (vss. 3-4). Psalm 132 contains a very similar statement: "The Lord has

sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: 'I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body. If your sons will keep My covenant and My testimony which I shall teach them, their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore."

Along with the various inspired psalmists, other Old Testament writers noted the Messianic lineage through David and his throne. One of the most memorable of all Messianic predictions from the Old Testament, Isaiah 9:6-7, mentioned the Messianic reign upon the throne of David:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Yet, along with the fact that the Messiah was to be of the seed of David and reign on His throne, at least one Psalm places David in a subservient position to this majestic Messianic ruler. Psalm 110 opens with the statement: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (Psalm 110:1). In regard to Psalm 110, Briggs noted: "The 110th Psalm is in the form of an utterance from Jahveh respecting the son of David. It is therefore a prediction that unfolds the prediction of Nathan" (1988, p. 132). Walter Kaiser, in his discussion of Psalm 110, wrote: "While the external evidence that this psalm is Messianic is large, the internal evidence is just as overwhelming" (1995, p. 94). In reference to the Messiah mentioned in the first verse, Kaiser stated: "That unnamed Lord is a royal person, for he was invited to 'sit at [God the Father's] right hand....' If the God of the universe invited this other Sovereign to take such a distinguished seat alongside himself, then we may be sure he was no one less than the promised Messiah, invited to participate in the divine government of the world" (p. 94).

Psalm 110 adds an interesting aspect to the character and position of the Messiah. Not only would the Messiah be born from the seed of David and reign on the throne of David, He also would be exalted to a position far above David, to such an extent that David called him "Lord" in Psalm 110. David's statements in this Psalm not only speak to the pre-existence of the Mes-

siah before David, but also to the pre-eminence that the Messiah would assume.

With these details, the portrait of the Messiah becomes increasingly sharp. He was to come from the seed of woman and crush the power of Satan. He was to be of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and now David. He would rule on the throne of David, yet He existed before David and was so pre-eminent that David called Him Lord. And there would be no end of His glorious, majestic kingdom.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

Anyone who reads the Old Testament would be hard pressed to miss the idea of the Messiah's glorious regal prominence. Yet, as equally transparent is the idea that the Messiah was to suffer. The protevangelium in Genesis 3:15 makes reference to this suffering in the statement about the heel of the Seed of women being bruised, but it does not include the details of this suffering. The theme of suffering introduced in Genesis 3:15 is expanded in the remainder of the Old Testament.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

The passage of Scripture found in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 stands as a somber reminder of the horrendous suffering that the Messiah would endure. The text mentions that He would be highly exalted and extolled (52:13). And yet His appearance would be marred more than any man (52:14). He would not be physically attractive (53:2), and He would be despised and rejected by men, familiar with sorrows and grief (53:4). He would be perfect and without sin (53:9), and yet He would be beaten, suffer, and die for the sins of the Lord's people (53:5-6,11). This suffering Servant would be killed among the wicked, but buried among the rich (53:8-9). Yet, in spite of His death (or even because of it), He would be numbered among the great and divide the spoil with the strong (53:12).

Needless to say, this picture of the Messiah seems to stand in stark contrast to the glorious King on David's throne. As has been mentioned, this contrast has caused some to concoct two Messiahs to accommodate the prophecies. Still others have attempted to discount Messianic prophecies such as Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Some have suggested that this passage of Scripture is not Messianic in nature, but that the servant under discussion represents the collective nation of Israel. Along these lines, David Baron noted: "Modern Jews, in common with a number of rationalistic so-called Christians, are trying hard these

days to weaken the Messianic application of this remarkable prophecy” (2000, p. 225). James Smith stated:

The Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 was acknowledged by Jewish authorities until the Middle Ages. Almost all Christian leaders until the beginning of the nineteenth century saw in this passage a clear picture of the suffering, death and resurrection of the Messiah. Jews and some Christian scholars now hold primarily to the collective view of the Servant: The Servant is Israel as a whole, or the remnant. The traditional view, however, has much to commend it (1993, p. 307).

That the ancient Jewish community, and the bulk of scholars for the last 2,000 years, have recognized Isaiah 53 as a prophecy concerning a personal, individual Messiah cannot be questioned. Baron correctly commented regarding this sentiment:

That until recent times this prophecy has been almost universally received by Jews as referring to Messiah is evident from Targum Yonathan, who introduces Messiah by name in chapter lii 13, from the Talmud (“Sanhedrin,” fol. 98, b); and from Zohar, a book which the Jews as a rule do not mention without the epithet “holy...” (2000, p. 226).

The recent view that Isaiah 53 refers to the nation of Israel not only garners little (if any) support from ancient Jewish commentators, it collapses under the scrutiny of critical examination. The foremost objection to the view that Israel collectively is the Servant in Isaiah 53 is the fact that the Servant is described as perfect and sinless (53:9), not deserving the punishment

that He willingly accepts for the sins of God’s people. No one remotely familiar with the nation of Israel as portrayed in the Old Testament would dare suggest that they were sinless. From their first few steps out of Egypt and into freedom they began to provoke God and bring judgment upon themselves. On numerous occasions the Old Testament depicts the Israelites’ sin of such a rebellious nature that God executes thousands of them. One fundamental aspect of an atoning sacrifice in Old Testament literature was its condition of spotless perfection. No nation of mere mortal men, including the ancient Israelite nation, could suffice as an atoning sacrifice for sins, as the Servant does in Isaiah 53. Nor could a sinful nation make another group of people “righteous” as the Lord’s Servant would. Furthermore, the Servant of the Lord is depicted as being stricken for “transgressions of my people.” If the Servant was collectively depicted as the nation of Israel, then who would be the Lord’s people in 53:8? [NOTE: For a more complete refutation of Israel as the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53, see Baron, 2000, pp. 225-251.]

Indeed, the evidence points overwhelmingly to the fact that Isaiah 53 stands as one of the most poignant portrayals in all of the Old Testament of an individual, suffering Messiah. As Smith correctly noted: “The Servant of the Lord here is portrayed in a strongly individualistic way. It takes rich imagination or strong prejudice to see the Servant here as a symbol for Israel, the remnant, the prophets, or any other group” (p. 1993, 307). Kaiser similarly commented: “Undoubtedly, this is the sum-

mit of OT prophetic literature. Few passages can rival it for clarity on the suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah (1995, p. 178).

VARIOUS SPECIFIC MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

In addition to the broad strokes portraying the Messiah as a reigning king and suffering servant, there are a host of more specific, detailed prophecies that relate to His coming. In regard to the number of Messianic prophecies, Sintala wrote: “It is estimated that the Old Testament contains altogether some 456 prophecies concerning Christ. Of these 75 are to be found in the Pentateuch, 243 in the Prophets and 138 in the ‘Writings’ and Psalms” (1992, p. 149; cf. Free and Vos, 1992, p. 241).

Space prohibits a listing of all of these prophecies, but a representative sampling is appropriate. The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem in Judea (Micah 5:2) of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). He was to be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9) for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:13). The Lord’s Ruler would come into Jerusalem riding on the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). He would be buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9). During His suffering, His clothes would be distributed to those who cast lots for them (Psalm 22:18). His attackers would pierce Him (Zechariah 12:10). Even though His physical suffering would be severe, His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20). And in spite of His death, His physical body would not experience decay (Psalm 16:10). This small sampling of specific prophetic details is only a fraction of the many Old Testament prophecies that exist. The prophecies were specifically designed to be an efficient mechanism by which the Jewish community could recognize the Messiah when He arrived.

WHO IS THE MESSIAH?

When all of the pieces of the Messianic puzzle are put together, one individual stands out as the only person who fulfilled every single prophecy in minute detail—Jesus Christ. The life and activities of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament documents blend the theme of a regal monarch and a suffering servant into one magnificent portrait of the triumphant Jesus Who was the sacrificial lamb at His death on the cross, and Who became the triumphant Lion of Judah in His resurrection from the grave. The lineage of Jesus Christ is meticulously traced in order to show that He qualified as the Seed of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of

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Judah, and of David (see Matthew 1 and Luke 3:23-38). The narrative detailing His birth verifies that He was born in Bethlehem of Judea, from which city the Messiah would arise (Luke 2:1-7). The birth narrative also intricately portrays the pre-existence of Jesus before time began, fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would come before King David. Furthermore, Jesus did, in fact, enter Jerusalem riding on the foal of a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11).

The New Testament narratives depicting the death of Jesus Christ verify that Jesus was betrayed by His friend and sold for exactly 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 24:14-16). At His death His bones were not broken, soldiers cast lots for His garments, and His side was pierced with a spear (John 19:33-37; Matthew 27:35). During His suffering, He was numbered with the transgressors as Isaiah 53 predicted by being crucified between two thieves, and at His death He was buried in the tomb of a wealthy man as was also foretold (Matthew 27:57). This type of verification could continue for many pages. The life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, as depicted in the New Testament documents, fulfilled the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament.

Due to this overwhelming congruence of the life of Jesus Christ with the predictive Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament, some have suggested that Jesus was an imposter who was able, by masterful manipulation, to artificially organize His life so as to make it look like He was the Messiah. Such a contention cannot be reasonably maintained in light of the fact that many of the prophecies were far beyond His control. Obviously, it would be impossible for a person to arrange where he would be born. Furthermore, it would be impossible to coordinate events so that He could ensure that He was buried in the tomb of a rich man or crucified among thieves. How could the betrayal price of Judas be manipulated by Jesus? And how, pray tell, would Jesus have managed to arrange it so that soldiers cast lots for His clothing? The idea that Jesus manipulated events to make it appear as if He was the Messiah not only is indefensible, but it also speaks to the fact that Jesus obviously was the fulfillment of the Old Testament, Messianic prophecies.

Others have objected to Jesus as the Messiah based on the idea that the New Testament documents are not reliable, and were artificially concocted to describe things that Jesus never really did. This objection also falls flat in light of the actual evidence. It cannot be denied that the New Testament has proven itself to be the most reli-

able book from ancient history. When it records people, places, and events that are checkable using archaeological means, those people, places, and events invariably prove to be factual and historic (see Butt, 2004). Again, the abundant evidence verifies that the New Testament is accurate and factual. Many of the Messianic prophecies documented in the New Testament do not describe anything inherently miraculous. There was nothing miraculous about Jesus being buried in a rich man's tomb. Nor was there anything miraculous about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey, or being betrayed by His friend for 30 pieces of silver. These events are, if not ordinary, at least very plausible, everyday events that theoretically could have happened to anybody. And yet, due to the fact that such everyday events had been predicted about the Messiah **hundreds of years before the arrival of Jesus**, the fulfillment of the events becomes one of the most amazing miracles recorded in the Bible. It is no wonder that Jesus, the apostles, and the early church used fulfilled Messianic prophecy as one of their foundational pillars of proof and evangelistic tools.

CONCLUSION

In the Old Testament, it is almost as if we have a satellite picture from space of the Messiah many thousands of miles away, yet with each new prophecy, the picture continues to move nearer, until at last we are able to view a complete close-up of the Messiah—Jesus Christ. As the distinguished Hebrew scholar Charles Briggs noted: “In Jesus of Nazareth the key of the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament has been found. All its phases find their realization in His unique personality, in His unique work, and in His unique kingdom. The Messiah of prophecy appears in the Messiah of history” (1988, p. 498).

In Acts 8:26-40, Philip the evangelist approached the Ethiopian who was riding in a chariot reading the Old Testament Scriptures. As Philip approached, he heard the man reading a section from Isaiah 53 in which the sufferings of the Messiah are depicted. Upon entering into a conversation with Philip, the man asked Philip, “[O]f whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” Immediately after this question, the Bible says that Philip “opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him” (Acts 8:35). In truth, Jesus is the sum total of every Old Testament, Messianic proph-

ecy ever uttered. From any single one of those ancient Scriptures, the honest, informed individual could open his or her mouth and preach Jesus, the Messiah.

[NOTE: The extended version of this article on our Web site contains additional, pertinent material on the New Testament's use of Old Testament prophecy as it applies to Jesus.]

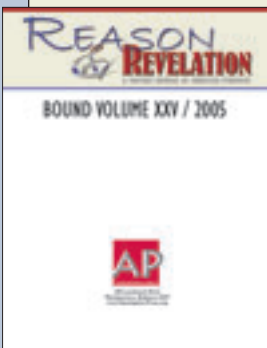
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NOTE FROM THE EDITORS



THREE MORE A.P. RESOURCES ARE NOW AVAILABLE!



With the advent of a new year, we are happy to offer to our readers the completed 2005 bound volumes of our two monthly magazines. These bound volumes enable the articles contained therein to remain relevant far beyond the time period during which they were authored. The bound volume of *Reason & Revelation* for 2005 now is available from our offices, and contains articles on such topics as: the eternity of hell; the intelligent design inherent in both the human nervous and circulatory systems as proof of God; the molecular

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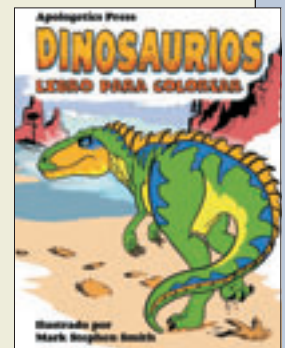
We also would like you to know that the 2005 bound volume of *Discovery*, our monthly magazine on Scripture and science for children, now is available for \$12. During 2005, *Discovery* contained articles on such timely topics as: dinosaurs; the dangers of drugs and alcohol; the second coming of Christ; repentance; interesting plants; the birth of Christ; the origin of life; and many others. Kyle Butt and Eric Lyons serve as the editor and associate editor of *Discovery*, respectively, and do a marvelous job in ensuring that the content throughout the year is varied so that children receive well-rounded instruction.



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