

Perhaps many of you can remember that a few years ago some Christians were concerned that the true meaning of Christmas had become hijacked and masked by all its commercialism. Such phrases as 'the reason for the season', and 'put Christ back into xmas' were coined. Perhaps there were more, and maybe we should hold a competition to coin yet a few more such phrases.

Anyway, as we come to the end of Advent, that patient time of expectant waiting, we draw near to Christmas. We shall read the familiar scripture verses, and will be once again able to sing out the meaningful Christmas carols telling of our Lord, the Messiah's, birth at Bethlehem.

But let us also remember during this coming Christmas time, that our Father God has proved Himself by declaring, 'the end from the beginning' (Isaiah 48v5), and so we find that the Old Testament is full of prophecies relating to our Lord's incarnations, both those of his birth and of his coming again. So let us remind ourselves of just ten of those essential scriptures that relate to Jesus' birth and life.

The prophet Micah, prophesying around 737 to 696 BC, predicted the place of our Lord's birth, "But from you Bethlehem shall come one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5v2).

Then the prophet Isaiah, sometime between 740 to 700 BC, announced that a young woman, initially referring to the prophetess -probably his wife, would bare a son and call his name Immanuel-God with us (Isaiah 7v14). But this is also seen as a prediction of our Lord Jesus birth to the Blessed virgin Mary many years later.

And the prophet Daniel around BC 539, in one of the most powerful and significant prophecies in the Old Testament (Daniel 9v24-26), predicted the time of the Messiah's life and ministry to the start of our present age.

Also many years before those prophecies Samuel (2Samuel 7v12-13) had revealed to him from God that the Messiah would be of the house of king David, a descendent of David, just as we know Jesus was in the genealogies given in Matthew and Luke.

The prophet Hosea, given the unfortunate title 'the deathbed prophet of Israel', as he was the last prophet to that Northern Kingdom before its fall to the Assyrians in 722 BC, used a phrase "out of Egypt have I called my Son" (Hosea 11v1). The phrase that Matthew (Matthew 2v15) used to show that after Herod's death, Joseph brought Mary and Jesus back from their exile in Egypt where they had gone to escape king Herod's slaughter of the innocent children.

Returning to the great prophet Isaiah (9v2), we read of the Messiah, Jesus, having a ministry starting in the Galilee, "The people who walked in darkness (referring to the tribal regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, the Galilee) have seen a great light, those who dwelt in in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined."

The prophet Zechariah, whose ministry began around 520 BC, could see the coming triumphal entry of our Lord to Jerusalem on psalm Sunday when he wrote (Zechariah 9v9), "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass."

And returning to that great prophecy of Daniel, in chapter 9v26 Daniel foretold how Jesus must die before the destruction of the second Temple.

And we are all so familiar with the words of king David's psalm 22, which describes the time of the crucifixion, and where in verse 18 David predicts how the soldiers would cast lots for Jesus garments (Matthew 27v35).

So returning to the prophet Isaiah (53v5) to complete this brief overview, we read such great words of comfort that sum up so beautifully our Christian gospel, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was

bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed". God became incarnate and Jesus was born at Bethlehem, born so that he could make a onetime sacrifice of himself, and through his precious blood shed at Calvary, Jesus could affect our redemption to our Holy God and Father. Now that is a good reason for this season of Christmas!

I hope that you have found these few prophecies, prophecies that relate to our Lord Jesus first Advent, encouraging. But there are far more prophecies in the scriptures that relate to Jesus second Advent, to his second coming, but that is another story.

Blessings to you all, Rev. Mike