

THE BIBLE A BOOK OF ACCURATE PROPHECY



This eight-part series in “Awake!” is examining an outstanding feature of the Bible—its prophecies, or predictions. The articles will help you to answer these questions: Are Bible prophecies merely the work of clever humans? Do they bear the hallmark of divine inspiration? We invite you to weigh the evidence.

“We Have Found the Messiah”

TIME LINE OF FOUR MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

- 1** The Messiah would be a descendant of King David

1070 B.C.E.

David becomes king of all Israel



607 B.C.E.

Jerusalem is destroyed by the Babylonians



455 B.C.E.

Command is given to restore and rebuild Jerusalem

MANY centuries before Jesus’ birth, the Hebrew prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah, which in Hebrew means “Anointed One.” Those prophets gave specific details about the future Messiah’s life—including his line of descent—where and when he would arrive, and what would happen to him.

Christians in the first century C.E. believed that these prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus. They felt as did the disciple Andrew, who told his brother Simon: “We have found the Messiah.” (John 1:40, 41) Was that conclusion correct? Let us look at just four of the many prophecies regarding the Messiah, and in each case we will consider the evidence.

Prophecy 1: “He will sit on David’s kingly throne.”—Isaiah 9:7, “Knox.”

Fulfillment: Matthew’s Gospel opens with the words: “The book of the history of Jesus Christ, *son of David*, son of Abraham.” Matthew then traces Jesus’ descent through David, as does the Gospel writer Luke.—Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38.

What history reveals:

● The writings of Jewish historian Josephus indicate that genealogical records of Jewish families were available in public archives. Those records were destroyed in 70 C.E. when Jerusalem was pillaged. But prior to Jerusalem’s destruction, the claim that Jesus was a descendant of David had been widely publicized. (Matthew 9:27; 20:30; 21:9) Had that claim been false, anyone could have challenged or even disproved it. Yet, there is no record that anyone attempted to do so.

Prophecy 2: “O Bethlehem Ephrathah, the one too little to get to be among the thousands of Judah, from you there will come out to me the one who is to become ruler in Israel.”—Micah 5:2.

Fulfillment: Jesus was born in Bethlehem. When Caesar Augustus ordered a census, Jesus’ foster father, Joseph, was obliged to go from Nazareth to “Judea [Judah], to David’s city, which is called Bethlehem, because of his being a member of the house and family

2	The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judah	3	The Messiah would arrive 483 years after the command was given to rebuild Jerusalem	4	The Messiah would die with sinners and would be buried with the wealthy
2 B.C.E.	Jesus is born in Bethlehem of Judah in the family line of David	29 C.E.	Jesus is baptized and anointed as the Messiah	33 C.E.	Jesus dies with criminals and is buried with the wealthy

of David, to get registered with Mary.” While there, Mary “gave birth to her son” Jesus.—Luke 2:1-7.

What history reveals:

- Archaeology confirms that the Romans conducted censuses in the Middle East for the purpose of tax collection and military conscription. Evidence of one such census can be seen in an edict of the Roman governor of Egypt in 104 C.E. A copy of that edict, now in the British Library, reads: “Seeing that the time has come for the house to house census, it is necessary to compel all those who for any cause whatsoever are residing out of their nomes [districts] to return to their own homes, that they may both carry out the regular order of the census, and may also attend diligently to the cultivation of their allotments.”

- At the time of Jesus’ birth, two towns in Israel were called Bethlehem. One was in the north near Nazareth. The other, evidently formerly known as Ephrath (or Ephrathah), was near Jerusalem in Judah. (Genesis 35:19) Jesus was born in the latter town, just as Micah had foretold some eight centuries earlier.

Prophecy 3: *“From the going forth of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Leader, there will be seven weeks, also sixty-two weeks.”—Daniel 9:25.*

Fulfillment: The period of time specified in Daniel’s prophecy amounts to 69 units of 7 years each, or 483 years. The rebuilding of Jerusalem began in 455 B.C.E. As prophesied, 483 years (69 weeks of years) later, in 29 C.E., Jesus became the Anointed One, or Messiah, when he was baptized and anointed with God’s holy spirit.*—Luke 3:21, 22.

What history reveals:

- In the early part of the first century C.E.,

* For more information on this prophecy relating to the timing of the Messiah’s appearance, see pages 197-199 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“the people were in expectation” of the Messiah’s arrival. (Luke 3:15) In his book *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*, Jewish scholar Abba Hillel Silver writes that the period before the destruction of Jerusalem “witnessed a remarkable outburst of Messianic emotionalism.” He also notes that “the Messiah was expected around the second quarter of the first century.” The anticipation of the Jews, Silver writes, was based on “the popular chronology of that day.”

Prophecy 4: *“He will make his burial place even with the wicked ones, and with the rich class in his death.”—Isaiah 53:9.*

Fulfillment: Jesus was executed alongside two condemned criminals, yet he was buried in a quarried-out tomb donated by a wealthy believer—Joseph of Arimathea.—Matthew 27:38, 57-60; John 19:38.

What history reveals:

- Numerous ancient non-Christian writers—including Jewish historian Josephus and Roman historian Tacitus—testify that Jesus was executed as a criminal.

- Archaeological investigations in Palestine have uncovered ancient tombs consisting of chambers or vaults cut into rock. Having such a tomb already prepared and available would not have posed a problem for a wealthy and influential person such as Joseph of Arimathea.

The foregoing represents just a few of the many Messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus. Clearly, no human could falsify the fulfillment of those detailed prophecies. Their precise fulfillment strengthens our faith that God was their Source and that he will yet bring all the foretold Messianic blessings to reality for obedient mankind.

In the next article in this series, we will discuss an intriguing question: If Jesus really was the promised Messiah, why did he allow himself to suffer and die?