

Winnie went to Holland Christian High School and in that sense is a Michigander. But really inside, her beats with the heart of a farmgirl from South Dakota. When she was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Dakota Christian High, her Bible Teacher, Harv DeJaeger made this profound statement to his class: *"I don't care whether you remember everything we learn in class, but if I should meet you again in some far-out city, and I'm old and gray getting around in my wheel chair—if I should ask you what the OT is all about, I hope your answer would be, 'It's all about the coming of Christ.'"*

It is utterly astounding when you think about it. The Bible is a book written over a period of 1500 years. That amounts to a span of 60 generations. It was written over a period of 1,500 years by more than forty authors from every walk of life [fishermen, farmers, shepherds, poets, and fig pickers from Tekoa] on three different continents, in three different languages [Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek] on hundreds of different controversial subjects. But here's the clincher. All forty authors agree. Take another swatch of 1,500 years. Get 40 authors to sit around a big table. Kant, Gandhi, Descartes, Carl Sagan, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard. Do you think you could get them to agree on any significant point of philosophy? But the 40 authors of Holy Scripture agree about this: This phenomenal creation is fallen. Humankind is desperately wicked. But the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, has come to rescue us and usher in a new creation. From start to finish, this profound, God-breathed book, points to the coming and reality of the Christ.

Jesus made that clear in the event recorded in Luke 24. Late one afternoon, two grim-faced men walked the dusty road from Jerusalem to the village called Emmaus. A third man approached the two, falling into their measured cadence and joining them in conversation. Coming to a standstill, they looked hard at the third Man. Hadn't he heard that Jesus the Nazarene, seized by Jewish leaders and impaled on a Roman cross, had been dead in the tomb for three days? It was hoped that he would redeem God's people. Now there were rumors of angels, visions, and an empty tomb. How did it all fit together? Jesus reprimanded the two disciples: *"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And then beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself* [24:25-27].

Luke tells us hearers that Jesus gave those disheartened disciples a history lesson in OT promises and NT fulfillment. For the Scriptures are clear: *"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ"* [2 Corinthians 1:20]. In essence, Jesus took these two forlorn disciples on an OT journey toward the Son. Together they relived the hopes and dreams of the OT people of God and they traveled the long night of expectation waiting in eager longing for the advent of the Messiah, for the rising Son.

As you journey across the state of South Dakota on Interstate 90, you cannot miss the unrelenting barrage of creative and not so creative billboards and road signs pointing weary pilgrims ahead to the world-famous oasis, Wall Drug. I understand there are road signs all over the world proclaiming you are only 10,000 miles away from Wall Drug. In keeping with the Belgic Confession Art #5 and Q & A 19 of the HC, we want to take you on a whirlwind tour over OT terrain, point out the

Messianic road signs, the promises and pre-figurements and show how they come to fulfillment in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

**I. THE PROMISE OF A CHAMPION. Genesis 3:15.** After the fall in the garden of Eden, hope seems to have totally collapsed. But God speaks a terrible curse to the serpent Satan. *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* One day in the line of Eve a champion would be born who would bust Satan's skull. That serpent might snap at his heel; but this champion would crush his skull.

**II. THE PROMISE OF THE PATRIARCHS: Abraham, Isaac & Jacob in Genesis 22:18.** When Abram was 100 and Sarai was 90, when it looked like their childbearing days were clearly over, [Isaac at this time had already been born] God promised to bring forth a son, a promised Seed. *"And through your seed [God said to Abraham] all nations on earth will be blessed"* [Genesis 22:18]. The word, seed, is singular. Through this single seed/descendant of Abraham vast blessing would flood the nations.

**III. THE PROMISE OF THE PROPHETS RE: the birth, death, resurrection and reign of the Prince of Peace, great King David's greatest Son.**

**Jesus' Birthplace.** Written before 686 B.C., 700 years before Jesus walked this earth. *"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..."* [Micah 5:2].

**Slit Throats and Blood Spilt of Sheep and Goat.** *"The sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law"* at Passover and the Day of Atonement [Leviticus 16] picture and prefigure the coming of the *"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* [John 1:29]. (Note Jesus died as thousands of Lambs were being slaughtered in Jerusalem).

**Jesus' death, resurrection, and reign and Spirit outpouring at Pentecost.** [1000 years before Christ]. *"They have pierced my hands and my feet....They divide my garments among them and cast lot for my clothing"* [Psalm 22:16, 18]. Perhaps the most moving description of Jesus' death was not written by a NT evangelist, but the OT prophet Isaiah in his song of Suffering servant, Isaiah 53. [800 years before Christ]. This powerful chapter announces Jesus' death for us as an atoning sacrifice [53:5], Jesus' patience and silence under suffering [*"as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth"* vs. 7]. We're told this servant would be numbered among criminals, so like a common criminal he was slaughtered on a cross with terrorists on his right and his left [53:12]. Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Aramaethea in fulfillment that this Suffering Servant would be *"assigned a grave...with the rich in his death"* [53:9 cmp. Matthew 27:56-60]. Isaiah's words propel this Servant from grave tragedy to triumph. *"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed....Though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied"* [Isaiah 53:5, 10-11].

In terms of Jesus' exaltation more prophecy was fulfilled. David sings of Jesus' resurrection [Psalm 16:10—*"You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay"*]; We read in advance of Jesus' Ascension [Psalm 68:18

"When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train"; Jesus' Enthronement is foretold as great David's Greater Son and Lord—"Yahweh said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'" [Psalm 110:1]. The OT prophet Joel (835 B.C.) announced "And afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions" [Joel 2:28ff]. And the Missionary expansion of the Church under the Lord's leading and in the Spirit's power, that movement was set in motion by the power of God's Word in the mouth of Isaiah, who announced that the Servant of the Lord would be a light to the Gentiles [Isaiah 42:6-7].

In the Church, we have heard of these promises so frequently that we are no longer awed by their concreteness, specificity, precision, and accuracy. There are over 2,000 specific prophecies in Scripture that have already been fulfilled. I have enumerated only a few. But the amazing thing is that these prophecies point ahead to the Christ were all spoken well over 400 years before He ever appeared. Would any self-styled prophet of the Renaissance era dare on his own, prophecy of events in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 400 years later? Or would you dare prophecy what the 25<sup>th</sup> century would be like?

Think of the self-proclaimed prophet, Jeanne Dixon (**picture**). In the decade of the 50's for example she prophesied who each of the presidential candidates of each of the major political parties would be. And she prophesied what she thought the winner of each of three presidential elections in '52, '56, and '60. How well did she do? She missed every winner of every presidential election and she missed every candidate as well (**psychic pic**). Several years ago the National Enquirer listed 61 prophecies by the ten leading seers in the world, reporting events that were supposed to transpire in the last six months of that year. Believe it or not, they missed all 61 prophecies. Tell me how does the puny word of man stack up against the accuracy, trustworthiness, infallibility of the Word of God? Not one of God's good promises have ever fallen to the ground [I Kings 8:56].

Science professor Peter Stoner in his book, Science Speaks, following the science of probability labored to determine the likelihood of a single person fulfilling just eight OT prophecies concerning Christ. With mathematical precision he figured that it would boil down to one chance in 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power i.e., 1 with a number with 17 zeroes after it. 100 million billion. Stoner illustrates this by suggesting we take 10 to the 17<sup>th</sup> power number of silver dollars and "lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them according to their own wisdom" [In The New Evidence that demands a Verdict, p. 193, cmp The Case for Christmas, p. 82].

Now the Belgic confession Article 5 on the authority of Scripture announces concerning all 66 books of the Bible. "We receive these books and these only as holy and canonical, for the regulating, founding and establishing of our faith." Why believe

this book? Secondly, the confession says, "For even the blind themselves are able to see that the things predicted in them do happen." You need to have your head examined if you think these prophecies are just screwball coincidences. But the ultimate reason we yield to this book is because of the corroborative inner witness of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit is no skeptic," Martin Luther said. The Spirit makes the truth of this book leap up off the page and come alive in our hearts. The Holy Spirit disperses the fog of doubt.

I've taken you on a whirlwind tour through the OT past all the prophetic road signs and billboards. "How do you come to know this [divine, human absolutely flawless mediator]? The Holy gospel tells me. [Here's the biblical road trip] God himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise; later, he proclaimed it by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and portrayed it by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; finally, he fulfilled it through his own dear Son" [Q & A 19]. Risen from the dead, Jesus gave two beleaguered disciples a whirlwind tour of the OT. After the men finally discovered who this stranger really was (when Jesus took bread and broke it) they exclaimed: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" [24:32].

Having heard the message of Christ is your heart burning within you? We've started a new school and church calendar year. Let me ask, are you on fire for the Lord? You see you can journey on Interstate 90 and never stop at the Wall Drug Oasis, and you can worship here every Sunday and be so blind you never embrace the Son. The point of the prophecies are to lead you to the one person who could offer more comfort, more refreshment, than Wall Drug could ever dream to do.

You see one day I'm going to get really old and have much less hair than I have now and I'll no longer preach sermons and no longer work out every day. My face will be weather-beaten and wrinkled. If I should run across you somewhere and ask, "Say, what's the OT all about?" I hope I could hear you say, "It's all about Jesus the Messiah, my Savior and my Lord."

Lee Stroebel in The Case for Christmas writes: *"The Greek word for 'Messiah' is Christ. But was the baby in the manger really the Christ? Did he miraculously fulfill these predictions that were written hundreds of years before he was born? And how do we know he was the only individual throughout history who fit the prophetic fingerprint?"* [p. 69]

[What about Lubavitcher]

This is the situation. There are millions of Jews who believe in Yahweh and yet when it comes to the question of the Messiah, they're stuck on the road to Emmaus. Oh, yes there 20,000 plus Hasidic Jews living in Crown Heights section of Brooklyn New York [More Jews in New York than in all of Israel!]. They're called Lubavitchers. And they believe a man by the name of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson was and is the Messiah. He died in 1994 at the age of 92. They expect this Rabbi to resurrect and return. When he showed up at a local synagogue in 1993 at the age of 91 thousands of Lubavitchers in their black coats and curly sideburns *"dashed down the sidewalks...jammed by hundreds into a main hall [and exploded with the] frenzy normally found at a championship sporting event"* [Yancey, The Jesus I Never Knew, p. 41]. When was the last time you were in a state of frenzied ecstasy over Jesus? So there are a measure of Jewish people who believe in a Messiah who has come and is coming. But most have taken the thought of a coming Messiah and put it on the shelf. The highway of history somehow has come to a screeching halt. They're stuck on the trip between Jerusalem and Emmaus.

When was the last time you were flat out pumped about Jesus? You were so thrilled with Jesus that you chewed on His words like a dog attacking a meat laden thanksgiving drumstick. You chugged down His truth like a sweat drenched athlete guzzles gallons of Gatorade. You followed your Rabbi so relentlessly down every dusty road that as the Ancients would say, you became covered in the dust of your Rabbi.

In the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, New York there live more than 20,000 Hasidic Jews. They're called Lubavitchers. And they believe a man by the name of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson was and is the Messiah. He died in 1994 at the age of 92. But they expect this Rabbi to resurrect and return.

When Rabbi Schneerson showed up at a local synagogue in 1993 at the age of 91 thousands of Lubavitchers in their black coats and curly sideburns *"dashed down the sidewalks...sprinting toward the synagogue...They jammed by hundreds into a main hall [and exploded with the] frenzy normally found at a championship sporting event"* [Yancey, The Jesus I Never Knew, p. 41].

The crowd erupted, *"Long live our master, our teacher, and our rabbi, King Messiah, forever and ever!"* Over and over they sang the chant until the Rabbi made a sleight gesture with

his hand and left their sight. Hundreds of Jews slowly left the hall stunned and in a state of sustained ecstasy.

Do you feel the shame?

Our Jewish friends got the wrong Messiah. Their theology is off. But somehow their religious enthusiasm trumps our affection for Jesus. We get more excited about an aging Barry Bonds belting his 755<sup>th</sup> homerun. We get more juiced about a wild High School basketball tournament or the fury of a fall season of Iowa football. Sport may be a healthy past time. No argument there. But Sport makes a lousy God.

We can get our priorities straight. We can *"Seek first the Kingdom of God"* [Matthew 6:33]. We can take our commitment to Christ to the next level. By the Spirit's power, we can crank up our passion for Jesus until we cannot contain our joy, but must gossip the good news of our Messiah Jesus Christ.

How do we do that? **Enroll as a life-long student in Jesus' school of discipleship.**

This is what Jesus means when He invites us to *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me"* [Matthew 11:29]. Here's an invitation to sit at His feet and drink in His words. Jesus' words to a thirsty soul are better than Gatorade and much more tasty than a turkey drumstick. And you needn't have a black coat and curly sideburns to chase after this Rabbi. Follow Jesus relentlessly and you'll be covered in the dust of your Rabbi.