

Christmas Prophecies

LEVEL 5 – THE CHRISTMAS PROPHECIES

Scattered throughout the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, we find repeated predictions of the Lord's Advent.

What Was the Purpose of Prophecies About the Messiah?

As we look at these prophecies we may wonder at their implications.

- ❖ Did the prophecy of the coming Messiah in any way predestine people (that is, force people to do things they didn't want to do)?
- ❖ What was the purpose of Messianic prophecy? What did it accomplish historically for the people of the church who lived before the Lord's birth?
- ❖ What did it provide for the angels at that time?
- ❖ What did it provide for the Christian Church as it struggled to spread in a pagan world
- ❖ And most important, what do these beautiful sayings give to the New Church man seeking conjunction with the Lord?

The Purpose of Creation

To answer these questions we first need to understand the purpose of creation. All people were born to be conjoined with the Lord in the happiness of heavenly life.

Conjunction is effected by uniting two distinct paths. The one is a path which we can prepare for ourselves, while the other is provided by the Lord. The one is the path of truth, while the other is the path of love. Truth is learned. It comes to us by our senses, the things we read and experience. Good is felt. It comes from the Lord from within.

To love the Lord, both good and truth must be present. The *feeling* needs the *form*. Jesus Christ provided this form while He walked on earth teaching and miraculously healing people. He could be touched and acknowledged as the One God in whom was all power. Today we may also read the story of these events as they have been preserved in the Word, and rejoice in our knowledge of God now visible in the truth of revelation.

But before the Advent such sight was impossible. Experience of God in Most Ancient times was limited. The people of the Most Ancient Church saw angels who represented the Lord. So the Lord was known by means of instruction by angels. The Lord Himself was invisible at that time. But He did not need to be seen in His Human form since people could feel this form represented in all the various things of His creation. Love inflowing brought conjunction.

The Fall

However, with the fall, when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, it became necessary that the Lord come in person to restore conjunction between people and Himself. Had He not come, and provided experience of Himself as a Man, no one could have been saved. Had the Lord not made Himself visible to us in His true Human form, all life on earth would have perished, since there would have been no conjunction with Him.

For this reason, the first of the prophecies was given at the fall. God said to the serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (*Gen. 3:15*).

Prophecy is the forecasting of facts which will follow a present event. The part of the prophecy about the bruising of the heel predicts the agony of the cross. The prophecy also predicts the virgin birth. It is the seed of the woman which will provide the medium whereby the Messiah will come. The angels of the celestial heaven well knew that God could not be born of a human father. They knew that if the Lord had been born of anything but Jehovah, He could never have conquered the hells by successively putting off evil and putting on His proper Divine Humanity.

The prophetic message *foresaw* facts already determined by the free choices of people—it did not destroy future free choices. Freedom, in fact, would have been destroyed had God not come, once man freely chose the path of evil.

Past Choice and Future Choice

Choices we have made freely in the past limit the area of choice we have in the future. But they don't take them away.

For example, your mother freely decides to bake a cake, and because she does this you are free to eat it or not. If, in her freedom, she never made the cake, you would never be able to choose to eat it or not. The consequences of her cake-making affects the *kinds of choices* you have, but don't take away your *freedom to choose*.

Such is the relationship between prophecy and freedom. The one never destroys the other, although former free acts will limit future ones. Divine prophecy, then, is the Divine foresight of what will follow from a present state, and since with God such sight is perfect, prophecy also is perfect.

1. WHY DON'T PROPHECIES PREDESTINE PEOPLE?

But what was the use of prophecy? Why didn't the Lord simply come on earth at the fall? Why was it necessary for thousands of years to pass before this blessed event?

The fact is that if the Lord had come at that time, we would have ignored Him, or worse still, profaned His truth. Judgment is only possible when a state is full. Only after the evils, which began in people's minds with the fall, had come completely out in the open was it possible for judgment and new conjunction with God to take place.

Further, the fall had necessitated a new way of conjoining with God by means of a written Word. Since that Word also had to provide a correspondential medium between heaven and earth, this preparation, if it was to preserve human freedom, necessarily would take time. The whole Word of the Old Testament had to be written while the freedom of everyone was protected.

2. WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG FOR THE LORD TO COME AFTER "ADAM" AND "EVE" LEFT "EDEN?"

A final reason for the long delay in God's coming was that the Advent was not necessary until it happened. Why, if the first prediction of the Messiah occurred at the fall, can we say the Advent was not necessary until several thousands of years later?

As we have seen, the purpose of the Advent was conjunction with God. Such conjunction was possible with people after the fall. They had a written Word that they could see as truth. In its pages, **because of prophecies** concerning the coming Messiah, they could worship God in the human form. They could draw from the pages of their Word a doctrine concerning God-Man, because God had told them prophetically that He would come on earth as a Man. Here is a most important use of messianic prophecy. By means of such prophecies people who lived before the Advent could think of the Lord as a Man, and so love Him.

It was these prophecies, and this doctrine of a future God-Man which enabled the Lord to prepare a remnant of good people with whom He could establish His Christian Church - Mary, Joseph, Simeon, the Apostles, and thousands of the early Jewish converts. All accepted Christ as the Messiah, God-Man.

3. WHY WERE PROPHECIES ABOUT HIS COMING IMPORTANT TO PEOPLE WHO LIVED BEFORE THE LORD'S BIRTH?

But the prophecies were not given just as a holding action until the Advent could take place. They had real value in the Christian Church, and also have value for us.

From Matthew onward, Christians confirmed their belief in God as Man by the fact that the prophecies were fulfilled in Him. Again and again we read the words: "that it might be fulfilled which was written by the prophet...."

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN THE "CHRISTMAS PROPHECIES" LESSON

1. They tell the consequences of the present choices people make, not the future choices of people. Mother'’ making a cake means I will have to choose whether to eat it or not, but I'm still free to choose.
2. People had to make free choices to do what was needed, including writing all of the Old Testament Word.
3. They helped them see Jehovah as a Divine Man. Kept the idea of God as Man alive.
4. They used them to confirm the truth that Jesus is Jehovah and therefore is God.
5. Prophecies:
 - Help us confirm the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ as God.
 - Help us see that God is a perfect Man.
 - Help us see how the Lord works in His government of the human race.