**“Prophecies Concerning the Messiah” The Present Truth 8, 9.**

E. J. Waggoner

Fair indeed was the estate granted to our first parents. Six days had the great Creator employed in fitting it up for them, each day’s work, as it was completed, being pronounced good. As the crowning act, when everything had been prepared for his reception, God made man in His own image, and gave him dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, and, in short, over the whole earth and everything that it contained. The earth was fruitful, and was unencumbered with thorns and thistles. Slight toil, and that unaccompanied by fatigue, would suffice to cause it to yield to him its abundant increase. Moreover, “the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” Genesis 2:8, 9, 15. {PTUK May 5, 1892, p. 136.1}

All man himself had to subdue, to plant and cultivate, the remainder of the earth, God himself planted the garden of Eden, and man had only the delightful task of directing the luxurious growth, and feasting his eyes and his palette upon the fruit which grew spontaneously. Here was provision for perfect happiness: everything was provided without stint, and of the most exquisite quality, and man had the most refined, delicate taste with which to enjoy it to the full, all his perfectly balanced nature prevented him from marring the pleasure by any excess. With a companion perfectly adapted to him, his counterpart, nothing was lacking that could contribute to his enjoyment of life. {PTUK May 5, 1892, p. 136.2}

But into this Eden the tempter came. Having been cast as profane out of the mount of God, because of the rebellion to which his pride had urged him on, his soul satisfaction was found in trying to thwart the purposes of God, and in causing others to share his own unhappy lot. Knowing that obedience is life, he planned the death of the human race, by causing our first parents to sin. Where was happiness, he sowed the seeds of discontent; where was meekness, and willing subjection to God’s just and mild requirements, he planted pride and unholy ambition; where was the utmost liberty, because man was walking in the law of God, the adversary of souls brought hard and cruel bondage, and the lonely prison house. By insinuating into their minds the idea that God was a harsh task-master, and that by his gentle rule he was seeking to elevate himself at their expense, he caused them to seek for “larger liberty” in their own way; and thus they found that, although a man’s own way may seem right in his own eyes, “the end thereof are the ways of death.” “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” {PTUK May 5, 1892, p. 136.3}

But the loving Father did not leave His children entirely in the hands of their merciless adversary. Immediately after our first parents had committed the sin, “brought death into the world, and all our woe, with loss of Eden,” God spoke the words which saved the guilty ones from utter despair, saying to the one who had caused the fall, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Genesis 3:15. These words are universally understood as containing the promise of the Messiah, who should destroy Satan and his works, and said at liberty those whom he had bound; and in the succeeding ages, until the day that they were fulfilled, the highest hope of every woman who believed God’s Word, was that she might be the mother of the great Deliverer. {PTUK May 5, 1892, p. 136.4}

Immediately we find evidence of faith in the coming Redeemer. Abel brought to the Lord and offering “of the firstlings of the flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering.” Says the apostle: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” Hebrews 11:4. This offering showed Abel’s faith in the Lamb of God, who, by His death, should take away sin. Because of his faith he was counted righteous. This exceedingly brief account is complete evidence to us that the plan of salvation was known in all its fulness to the first inhabitants of earth. By this sacrifice Abel showed that he knew how and why the Messiah was to be “bruised.” {PTUK May 5, 1892, p. 136.5}

The promised Messiah, who was foreshadowed by all the Jewish sacrifices, was the hope of that nation in all its history. So closely is the Messiah connected with the Jewish nation, that we cannot think of one without thinking of the other. Moses prophesied of Christ, when he said to the Jews: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, liken to me; unto Him ye shall harken.” Deuteronomy 18:15. And so generally was this prophecy understood as referring to the Messiah, that when the Jews wanted to know if John the Baptist was the promised One, they simply asked, “Art thou that prophet?” John 1:21. {PTUK May 5, 1892, p. 136.6}

The Old Testament is dotted with prophesies concerning the first advent of Christ. To them Jesus appealed to prove His Divine mission, and by them the apostles convinced the people that Jesus is the Christ. After Philip had obeyed the Master’s call, “Follow Me,” he found Nathanael, and said unto him, “We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.” John 1:45. Jesus Himself said to the unbelieving Jews: “For if ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for he wrote of Me.” John 5:46. Paul said to Agrippa: “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.” Acts 26:22, 23. And Peter said of Christ: “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.” Acts 10:43. {PTUK May 5, 1892, p. 136.7}

Since, on the authority of the Scriptures, there was so general an expectation of the Messiah, why was it that when Christ came “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not”? John 1:11. The only answer that can be given is that they did not really believe their own Scriptures; for all the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and could not apply to any other person. It is true that we would not recognise many of these Old Testament prophecies as referring to Christ, if the application were not made by the inspired writers of the New Testament. But the Jews had inspired prophets to enlighten them, so that they were without excuse for their unbelief. The application of many of the prophecies, however, is very evident, and we can readily trace their fulfillment as we read the New Testament narrative. From the multitude of these prophesies, we shall note the fulfillment of a few of the most prominent, as an aide to our faith in the statement that “the Scripture cannot be broken.” E. J. W. {PTUK May 5, 1892, p. 136.8}

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When the wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is He that is born king of the Jews?” The chief priests and scribes of the people, to whom Herod applied to know where Christ should be born, replied promptly, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet.” And then they quoted the words which the prophet Micah had spoken more than seven hundred years before: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1-6. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.1}

The careful reader of the Scriptures knows that Joseph and Mary were residents of Nazareth, yet when the proper time came, a heathen emperor did his part toward the fulfilment of prophecy, by sending forth a decree that brought them to Bethlehem. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.2}

Of the life of Jesus before His baptism, the Scriptures say very little; but the date of His baptism was specified in prophecy nearly six hundred years before it took place. This prophecy is one of the most interesting and important in the Bible, and is well worth study. It was written by the prophet Daniel, to whom it was revealed by the angel Gabriel in the first year of Darius, B.C. 538. Some time before, Daniel had had a vision which he did not fully understand (Daniel 8:27), and in answer to his earnest prayer for light, the angel came to give him skill and understanding. The part of his revelation which pertains to this subject, is found in the following verses:- {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.3}

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” Daniel 9:25-27. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.4}

The going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, was the seventh year of Artaxerxes, or 457 B.C. See the seventh chapter of Ezra. There had been decrees concerning Jerusalem (See Ezra 1:1-4; 5:1-15), but this is the only one that contemplated the complete restoration of Jerusalem to its former power and glory, and consequently it is the one that must be referred to in the prophecy of Daniel. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.5}

From the date of this decree, until the Messiah, was to be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks, that is sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three days. Of course this did not mean that the Messiah should come in a little over a year from that time; but the prophecy concerning the days is one in which nations are represented by symbols (see Daniel 8:1-14), and the days must therefore be symbolic. In a prophecy recorded in Ezekiel 4:6, we learn that a prophetic day is a literal year. Therefore Daniel 9:25 is equivalent to the statement that four hundred and eighty-three years from the decree of Artaxerxes (B.C. 457), Messiah the Prince should come. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.6}

“But,” says one, “four hundred and eighty-three years from 457 B.C. would end several years this side of Christ.” That is true, but it is contemplated in the prophecy. The meaning of Messiah is the Anointed. See margin of John 1:41. By comparing a few Scriptures we shall find that His anointing took place at His baptism. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.7}

In Acts 10:37, 38 Peter says of the word which God said unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ:- {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.8}

“That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him.” {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.9}

Thus we learn that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost, immediately after which He began His ministry. Now turn to the record in Matthew 3:16, 17, and we find that as Jesus came up out of the water where He had been baptized, the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon him, and the voice of God was heard, saying, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” So Jesus was formally set apart, before the multitude, for His Divine mission, and very soon afterward we find Him in the synagogue, saying: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” Luke 4:18. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.10}

Jesus, therefore, became the Messiah the Anointed One, at His baptism. Before that time the title did not belong to Him. And we shall find that this was just four hundred and eighty-three years after the decree of Artaxerxes to restore Jerusalem. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.11}

The baptism of Jesus occurred when He “began to be about thirty years of age.” Luke 3:23. But it was not in the year 30 A.D., because the Christian era dates from about four years after the birth of Christ. From Luke 1:13, 36, we learn that Jesus was just six months younger than John the Baptist. Now since thirty years was the age when the Jews, who were appointed to the service of the sanctuary, entered upon their work (Numbers 4:30), and since Jesus followed this rule, and was baptized at the age of thirty, we must conclude that John the Baptist began his work as the forerunner of Christ at the same age, or about six months before Jesus was baptized. So if we can take the date of the beginning of John’s work, we shall know the date of the baptism of Jesus. The following scripture gives most explicitly the time when John began his ministry:- {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.12}

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” Luke 3:1-3. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.13}

Tiberius Cæsar began to reign, conjointly with his father in A.D. 12, and his fifteenth year would therefore be A.D. 27. Jesus was baptized in the year A.D. 27. Now let us see if this agrees with what the angel said. Four hundred and eighty-three years from B.C. 457 would reach to the close of A.D. 26, provided we began to reckon from the first day of B.C. 457. But the decree went forth some time in the year 457 B.C. and not on its first day, and consequently there were only four hundred and a fraction of the four hundred eighty-three years, before the Christian era. This would bring us into the year 27 A.D., and that is when, as we have seen, the baptism of Jesus did actually occur. At that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “*The time is fulfilled,* and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Mark 1:15. E. J. W. {PTUK May 19, 1892, p. 152.14}