

December 4, 2022

The Story of Reality: CHRISTMAS

(Week 1) Christmas Predicted

I'd like to start with a not so random trivia question this morning. (There is a point to this, but let's have some fun with it).

Where was Jim Hammond born?

- A. Hollywood, California
- B. San Jose, California
- C. Tokyo, Japan

How many of you say the answer is A?

How many of you say the answer is B?

How many of you say the answer is C?

The answer is A! How many of you are surprised?

Now, imagine with me a completely made up scenario. Imagine that my parents decided to play a prediction game right after they got married.

The game was to write down their predictions without sharing what they wrote. They would put their answers in sealed envelopes to be opened 20 years later... This is what they were predicting:

- 1) How many children they were going to have , and
- 2) How many would be boys, and how many would be girls, and
- 3) Where each of these sons or daughters would be born.

- THEN imagine... 20 years later, they open up the envelopes.

Here is what really happened:

1. They had 5 kids
2. They had 3 boys, 2 girls.
3. 3 kids were born in Japan! And 2 in California.

QUESTION: If they had played this game,

- Do you think their predictions would have matched with each other's predictions? (not likely)
- Do you think either one of them would have guessed correctly?

Me neither!

NEXT QUESTION: How likely is it that they would have agreed if they had to write down 300 predictions?

We are now ready to enter into **“The story of REALITY--Christmas Series.**

Isaiah 46:10 (NIV) I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'

ONLY GOD CAN REVEAL THE END FROM THE BEGINNING!

How many prophecies did Jesus fulfill?

Conservatively, Jesus fulfilled at least 300 prophecies in His earthly ministry.

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The probability that all of these PROPHECIES are fulfilled by anyone is beyond astronomical, it's MIRACULOUS! **Only God can reveal the end from the beginning!**

I. You don't have to ABANDON your BRAIN to believe!

I find it incredibly helpful to have **concrete objective evidence** like the hundreds of prophecies in the ancient texts with spot on accuracy hundreds of years in advance.

The prophets knew when they were delivering a prophetic revelation. It is why these were written down.

- **THE BEGINNING:** ADAM AND EVE: **“SEED of the woman”** crushing the head of the serpent (GEN 3:15).
- **2000 BC: ABRAHAM:** **“SEED”** (Gen 12, and others) That “seed” would be a descendent of Abraham, through the promised nation of Abraham.
- **1500 BC: MOSES:** **“ANOTHER PROPHET”** like MOSES. (Deut. 18:15)

- **1000 BC: DAVID: “SEED” the “CHRIST” (2 Samuel 7, and many, many other prophecies)**

Now let’s get to some Christmas prophecies.

II. We must use our MINDS to understand the SIGNS

- **734 BC** the prophet ISAIAH reveals a SIGN to identify this King
Isaiah 7:14 (NIV) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.
- Prophecies often had a mysterious quality to them, with the mystery only being fully revealed after the fulfillment!

QUESTION: How could a born child be called Immanuel?

- This is particularly a stumbling block for a Jewish mind.

QUESTION: How can a virgin conceive?!

- This one may be challenging for many minds, but if you already believe Genesis 1:1. Why do we stumble here? In the beginning God created everything from nothing! God is the starting point before anything can exist. Why can’t God do this?
- **BUT WAIT: ISAIAH reveals more...**

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

QUESTIONS: How can a child be born who is called *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*?

The context is clearly “messianic”, meaning these prophecies are about the coming MESSIAH/CHRIST the coming King, and deliverer.

QUESTIONS: BUT how is this possible? How can a child born human be called *Almighty God*? How can a human be called “*Immanuel, God with us.*”? How can a child born human be called *everlasting Father*?

There is a hint in the first line.

Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...

QUESTION: Who is this child born to? Us! You don’t announce a birth this way. **Children are born to their parents.**

This is the STRANGEST BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT EVER!!!

QUESTION: What does it mean? *“to us a child is born; to us a son is given”*?

Who gives their son!?

This is the weirdest birth announcement ever!

More prophecies come...

- **700 BC:** Micah prophesied that the coming messiah would be born in Bethlehem (the city of David)

Micah 5:2 (NIV) “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, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

QUESTION: How can the ruler come in the future *“whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”* ?

And WHY BETHLEHEM? Matthew 2 explains

One reason:

- Mary and Joseph did not live in Bethlehem. But because the Romans demanded the Census they had to go to their ancestral home.
- The timing was terrible (last trimester. And a 90 mile trip?)
- **YET....The timing was perfect.**

*Galatians 4:4 (NIV) **But when the set time had fully come,** God sent his Son, born of a woman...*

Jesus was born in Bethlehem where more lambs than people were born. The town of Bethlehem **produced sacrificial lambs for Temple sacrifices** in nearby Jerusalem!

Mary had a little lamb; his fleece was white as snow.

When Jesus began his ministry: Another prophet, **John the Baptist** identified him prophetically: *“Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”*

This unblemished lamb was born for us! This lamb was God’s son given to us!

III. BELIEVE the prophecies and RECEIVE the SON

***John 3:16 (NIV)** For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

***Luke 2:11 (KJV)** For unto you is born this day ... a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

The Story of Reality-CHRISTMAS
(Week 1)
Predicted

SMALL TALK

1. How good are you at predicting the future? How good are you at planning the future? Do you have a failed prediction story? Do you have a planning failure story?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Isaiah 46:9-10.** How do these sentences relate to the series theme: “The Story of Reality–Christmas”? Why does God give humanity such early advanced notices?
3. **READ Ephesians 1:9-10; Galatians 4:4-5.** What do these passages have to say about God’s timing and his plans?
4. **READ Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; and Micah 5:2.** What “Christmas” details and advance notices did God give us?
5. **READ John 3:16; Luke 1:31-32; 2:1-7, 2:11.** Which lines of prophecy do these events fulfill?

GETTING PERSONAL

6. When were you in most need of, or grateful for a flashlight? How is a prophecy from God like that? Is God’s prophecy as good as a promise?
7. Which titles in Isaiah 9:6 are most encouraging to you?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

8. What situations feel like a weight on your shoulders? Read Isaiah 9:6 and 1 Peter 5:7 then cast these situations on the powerful shoulders of Jesus who cares for you!