

The Birth of Christ

Yeshua was actually born to die. He gave His life as an atonement for us.

It has been said that the New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. This is certainly true of the birth of the Messiah, which we celebrate this month. One need only turn to the pages of the Old Testament to discover where, when, how and why Jesus of Nazareth was born.

Where would the Messiah be born? When Herod the Great sought to find the Messiah, he asked the Jewish religious leadership to discover where He would be born. They, of course, had the answer immediately: Bethlehem.

How did they know this? Because the prophet Micah had recorded this revelation hundreds of years earlier. "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" (Micah 5:2, NIV).

There are two interesting points to this prophecy. First, the word Bethlehem is formed from two Hebrew words, bait ("house") and lechem ("bread"). It is no coincidence that Yeshua, the Bread of Life, was born in the town known as "house of bread."

Second, this verse has the fascinating statement, "Whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." This prophecy reveals the amazing paradox that the Messiah would be born, yet He already would have existed! Only Yeshua, who John reveals was in the beginning with God and is Himself God (see John 1:1) could have fulfilled this.

When would the Messiah be born? To answer this, we have to turn to Daniel 9 (for further study on this chapter, I

recommend Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks by Alva J. McClain, Zondervan). "The Anointed One will be cut off but not for Himself. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary" (see v. 26).

This clearly states the "Anointed One" (Mashiah, Messiah) would be "cut off," or killed, and that after this the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed. Daniel 9:26 foretells that the Messiah would die before the city of Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. It wasn't until A.D. 70—after Yeshua's crucifixion—that the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

How would the Messiah be born? One of the great signs of Messiah's birth was that He would be born of a virgin. This concept comes from the Old Testament and ancient Jewish expectation. As Isaiah 7:14 promised us: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

Those who argue against the virgin birth point out that the Hebrew word used here, *almah*, and translated "virgin" simply denotes a woman of marriageable age and not a virgin. Two things should be mentioned in response to this.

First, in the Septuagint—the translation of the Old Testament into Greek in 250 Jewish scholars chose to use the Greek word *parthanos* (the clear Greek word for "virgin") when they translated this passage.

Second, the origin of the virgin birth actually dates back to Genesis. Here, the Lord gives us His first promise to redeem mankind and informs Satan that at some point in time "the seed of the woman would crush his head" (see Gen. 3:15). He says "seed of the woman"—a strange phrase because "seed" is usually referring to the man.

Why would the Messiah be born? Again, the Old Testament has the answer. "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" (Is. 53:5)

Yeshua was actually born to die. He came to this earth, set an example for us of how to live, and then gave His life as an atonement for us.

What is most important about Christmas? That we remember the "reason for the season." This is a celebration of the Son of God. The incarnation of God Himself into human form has transformed time itself and has begun the process of redemption for all mankind.