

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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ADVENT 1: FAITH, HOPE, AND JESUS

Hebrews 11:1 and other scriptures

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Today we lit the hope candle for the first Sunday of Advent. Hope is what keeps people going in difficult times. The very nature of the word “hope” means that we anticipate something we cannot see.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 11:1

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

EXPLANATION:

- We do not hope for something in the past... because there is no hope in the past.
- We might hope for something in the present if we are hoping for something we cannot see. If we hope for something in the present, there is a veil between us and what it is we are hoping for. That veil is space. For instance, I might hope that someone’s surgery is going well because I am not in the surgery room watching. In other words, there is space between me and the person having surgery. I might hope that my friends’ travels are going well because I am not traveling with them and cannot see them traveling. Again, “space” is what is between me and the person traveling. I am here, the other person is there and between us is space, or distance.
- When we hope for something in the future, it means we are hoping for some type of favorable outcome that is not happening at the moment but is anticipated in the future. If we have hope, it means we can imagine the outcome of something.
 - “I hope I’ll pass all my classes.” (Imagines a good report card.)
 - “I hope to get all my bills paid someday.” (Imagines no debt.)
 - “I hope this sickness will go away.” (Imagines being healthy.)

Hopefully, we all have hope.

The prophets of old brought hope to people when they prophesied about a Messiah that would come someday. There were different types of prophetic messages. Many of them did not predict the future but gave ultimatums. For example, “Repent or else...” was a prophetic theme in the OT. In the book of Jonah, we learn about a prophet who got a message from God and went to Ninevah declaring God’s prophetic voice. The people repented, so God did not destroy Ninevah. This made Jonah angry as you know.

There were other types of prophecies as well. Today, we’ll focus on the Messianic prophecies.

As a pastor, I try to stay up on the Christian world as much as I am able. There’s a lot to keep up with. First, sermon preparation... next comes church concerns...then it goes from there. What’s happening in other churches. Where is the Lord moving. What is making the news, and so on.

A few months ago, I ran across some interesting news. There is a segment of people in the charismatic world that speak a lot about prophecy. Groups of so-called prophets hold conferences. I check in with their websites from time to time. Honestly, with the ones I’ve seen and whose works I’ve read, I am not convinced they are prophets.

For example, one woman claiming to be a prophet of God speaking for the Lord said that Trump would win by a landslide. Well, guess what? She was clearly not speaking for the Lord. Probably ten people sent me a video of a pastor in Kentucky. He spoke of a dream he had, and he predicted certain things that would happen around the election. None of them happened. He was wrong.

I am intrigued by the crowd of Christians who are eager to know the future. One woman wrote, “We must hear from the prophets.” Here is my response: “Why?” I am not eager to hear from anyone about the future, really, and there are two reasons why: God has ALREADY spoken, and I am confident in who holds the future.

THE PROPHECIES OF JESUS' BIRTH WERE 100% ACCURATE

The best way I can imagine what it was like for these Old Testament people is to imagine the second return of Jesus someday. We have plenty of prophecy about that, and we are awaiting its fulfillment.

Here are some selected prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of Christ, followed by their New Testament fulfillment. I tried to think through the best way to do this in a sermon format. Many of you like to read along with me when I read the scripture. Since the prophecies and their fulfillment are scattered all over the Bible, I'll read the prophecy and you can read the fulfillment. Turn to the book of Matthew chapter 1, and we'll start there. When I leave Matthew, I just want you to listen.

Jesus was born of a woman.

Why is this significant? You might say, all people are born of a woman. What this means is a human parent, a human mother. Notice there is no mention of a man.

SCRIPTURE: The Old Testament prophecy in Genesis 3:15 tells us Jesus would be born of a woman. *“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.”*

SCRIPTURE: And the New Testament fulfillment - Matthew 1:20 - *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”*

SCRIPTURE: And in Galatians 4:4 - *But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law...*

So we see the prophecy and fulfillment of Jesus born of a woman. It does not say he would be born of a man, because he was not. The Holy Spirit was his father. It is a miracle, and at the same time, it is a mystery.

Jesus was born of a virgin.

SCRIPTURE: The Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 said that *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

SCRIPTURE: And the New Testament fulfillment is found in Matthew 1:22-23. *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).*

Also, we have both the Old and New Testaments’ reference to “Immanuel”, meaning God with us.

SCRIPTURE: Another New Testament fulfillment is found in Luke 1:26-31. *In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” ²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. ³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.”*

So here we have the prophecy and fulfillment of a virgin who would conceive.

Jesus was a descendant of Jacob.

There is an unusual prophecy coming from a sorcerer in Numbers. The Bible says that when Balaam realized that God was pleased when he blessed Israel, he stopped his sorcery and began prophesying.

SCRIPTURE: Balaam said in Numbers 24:17 - *“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.”*

SCRIPTURE: And we have the New Testament fulfillment in Matthew 1:2. *Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...*

This is the lineage of Joseph that would have given Jesus his legal status.

And so now we have the prophecy and the fulfillment of Jesus as a descendant of Jacob.

Jesus came from the tribe of Judah.

SCRIPTURE: In the Old Testament, Genesis 49:10 says, *“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.”*

SCRIPTURE: In the New Testament, this is fulfilled in Luke 3:33, talking about the lineage of Jesus through Joseph his earthly father, who gave him his legal status. *The son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah...*

SCRIPTURE: And again in Hebrews 7:14 *For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah...*

And so now we have the prophecy and the fulfillment of Jesus coming from the tribe of Judah.

There was one who prepared the way for Jesus. This is John the Baptist.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 40:3 says, *“A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”*

SCRIPTURE: And the fulfillment is in Luke 3:3-6. *He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:*

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

And so now we have the prophecy and fulfillment of John the Baptist.

Jesus was the heir to King David's throne.

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:7 says *Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.*

SCRIPTURE: And the fulfillment is found in Luke 1:32. *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David...*

What if the prophets in Old Testament times missed it like the so-called prophets who were wrong about the election?

- What if even one of them had said that he would be an angel and not born of a woman?
- What if even one of them had said he would be from the tribe of Levi?
- What if one of them had said he would be born a descendant of someone beside Judah?

We'd be left speculating. We'd say 60% of those Old Testament prophets got it right. Wouldn't that be awful for the message of the Bible? "Here you are, a Bible where the prophecies were 60% accurate."

Because of the 100% accuracy of the prophecies of Jesus' birth, I can rest assured that:

The prophecies about the return of Jesus will be 100% accurate.

As I said earlier, God has already spoken.

Jesus' throne will be eternal.

SCRIPTURE: Daniel 2:44 says, *In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another*

people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 1:8-9: But about the Son (meaning Jesus) he says, *Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.*

Some may argue that this prophecy has been fulfilled, and from the perspective of a spiritual kingdom, yes it has. But from the perspective of an earthly kingdom that crushes all kingdoms and brings them to an end, it has not yet been fulfilled.

As sure as I am standing here, as sure as you are listening to me, this prophecy will be fulfilled.

There will be a kingdom and Jesus will be the king. There will be no elections. There will be no debates. There will be no political parties.

In a Lifeway survey from earlier this year, 84% of pastors responded that they believe the rise of false teachers and false teaching in today's world is a sign of the prophecy coming true.

Jesus is King of Kings today, and he is over everything!

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 1:17 says, *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

SCRIPTURE: I Thessalonians 4:16-17 *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

Because the Old Testament prophecies came to pass in the New Testament, I am completely convinced that prophecy is 100% accurate.

CONCLUSION: Today I've shared with you just a few of the prophecies about Jesus and their fulfillment. You have every reason to be completely confident that Jesus was indeed a real man, God in human flesh, walking this earth. He died on the cross, he rose again, and he ascended into heaven. And one day...yes one day he'll return, not as a humble, poor baby but as a triumphant king!

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