

Readings: Isaiah chapters 9, 11, 53; Jeremiah 23v1-8 and chapters 31-33; Joel chapter 2; Micah chapter 3.

A large number of prophets were sent to warn the people of God about the consequences of disobedience and rebellion. Many of these issued prophecies that had an immediate fulfilment, and an eschatological fulfilment (eschatological means to do with the Last Days when Messiah would come, and also when the last judgement would come). Some of these prophecies were purely eschatological.

There were clear warnings of the coming exile:

"Therefore My people will go into exile for lack of understanding; their men of rank will die of hunger and their masses will be parched with thirst." (Isaiah 5v13)

"The cities in the Negev will be shut up, and there will be no-one to open them. All Judah will be carried into exile, carried completely away." (Jeremiah 13v19)

"Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land." (Amos 7v11, and also see Amos 7v16-17)

"Shave your heads in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourselves as bald as a vulture, for they will go from you into exile." (Micah 1v16)

The prophets who warned of exile and their Messianic predictions

"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 Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9v6)

In Deuteronomy chapter 28 God had clearly told the people of Israel what the blessings for obedience would be. He had also clearly warned them of what the consequences of disobedience would be: "Just as it pleased the Lord to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please Him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess. Then the Lord will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other." (Deut 28v63-64)

The Lord sent prophet after prophet to warn them of what would happen to them if they persisted in rebellion and idolatry, but they would not listen. The prophecies were fulfilled to the letter. Both Israel (the part that followed Jeroboam, often referred to as the ten tribes) and Judah were carried away into exile. The ten tribes were scattered among all the nations, and were forever lost, as Moses warned the people in Deuteronomy chapter 28.

Judah, however, returned from exile just as the prophets had foretold: "This is what the Lord says: 'When seventy years are completed

for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfil My gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you', declares the Lord, 'and will bring you back from captivity.'" (Jeremiah 29v10-14)

Isaiah also prophesied of the return from exile, but his prophecies had a double meaning as they also pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom: "The desert and the parched land will be glad ... they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendour of our God ... Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy ... and the ransomed of the Lord will return, They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads, Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

(Isaiah 35v1-10, and also see Isaiah chapter 61)

The prophets foretold that the coming Messiah would be a son of David, of the tribe of Judah:

"The days are coming', declares the Lord, 'when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord our Righteousness.'" (Jeremiah 23v5-6)

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him ... The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them" (Isaiah 11v1-6)

There are many prophecies that the apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, identified as pointing to the coming of the Messiah:

"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." (Isaiah 7v14, quoted in Matthew 1v22-23)

"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 5v2, quoted in Matthew 2v6)

"A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God ... And the glory of the Lord will be revealed'" (Isaiah 40v3-4, quoted in Luke 3v4-6)

Jesus also drew on prophecy to prove to the people of His day that He was and is the Messiah:

"Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy." "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." (Isaiah 35v5-6 and Isaiah 61v1, referred to by Jesus in Matthew 11v4-5)

The Old Testament prophecy that most clearly points to Jesus' death in the place of sinners is Isaiah chapter 53:

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering ... surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities ... the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all ... After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."

These two pages only quote a very few of the prophecies that point to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, and the consummation of the Heavenly Kingdom which is yet to come even in our day. As you read through the Old Testament, particularly through Old Testament prophecy, you come again and again to prophecies that clearly pointed forward to the coming of Jesus.

But the wonder of salvation history is that not only do we have the spoken prophecies. The entire history of the people of Israel was an acted out prophecy, pointing to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sins, the Church as the people of God, the bride of the Lamb, and the final destination of God's children in the Kingdom of Heaven, to which the Promised Land pointed.

These two pages only cover the prophecies delivered before the exile of Israel and Judah. There were other prophecies delivered during and after the exile, which we will come to later.