



I've been thinking a lot about anticipation this week. Are you living in a moment of anticipation for anything right now? Are you longing for something? I know some of you are in the housing market. You're anticipating the day when you can give all of your money to the bank, I mean, settle into your own house! Some of you are excited about a vacation. Kids—what's something you have been really excited about recently? Today's sermon is all about anticipation. Let me show you how.

Throughout the Old Testament, God entered his created world in many ways.

- » God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden.
- » God spoke to Moses in the fire of a burning bush.
- » The Israelites followed God's presence as they traveled in the wilderness: a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud during the day.
- » God sat enthroned over the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle and the temple.
- » God's angels fought against enemy nations and completely destroyed them.
- » God sent a bolt of fire onto Elijah's sacrifice on Mt. Carmel.
- » God's Spirit fell upon Kings and Prophets to empower them to accomplish supernatural acts on his behalf.

When God showed up it was always very exciting. But the **best** still hadn't come! The Old Testament prophets talked about a Messiah who would come to the people of Israel. This Messiah would be stronger than any of their previous military leaders. This Messiah would be wiser than Solomon. This Messiah would make everything right.

Every Jewish girl hoped that she would be the mother of this Messiah. Imagine the honor! Every woman longed to see this hunk of a man. Every man longed to fight at his side, throwing off the oppressive power of foreign nations and displaying the power and dominance of the nation Israel. Everyone in Israel lived in a state of anticipating the Messiah's arrival.

They waited. And they waited. And they waited. Isaiah prophesied about him. Jeremiah prophesied about him. Ezekiel prophesied about him. Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi prophesied about him.

The waiting got longer and longer. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, died and the Messiah hadn't come. The next generation came, yet they didn't see the Messiah either. Then the next generation ... no Messiah. The people of Israel waited 400 years after Malachi for the Messiah to come. 400 years when God was silent.

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18).

God the Father had determined all the waiting was over. All the rituals of animal sacrifice, all the ceremonial law, all the separation between God's holiness and mankind's sin, it was all over. The Messiah was coming!

300 Old Testament Prophecies

You might wonder, How were the people of Israel supposed to know when the Messiah came? Was it enough for a teenage girl to post a picture of her and an angel on Instagram with the caption "Pregnant with the Messiah"?

No. God was much more thorough. For hundreds of years God had been giving his prophets little bits of information about the Messiah who would come in the future. These prophecies built the anticipation of the people.

When Jesus came he fulfilled over 300 prophecies from the Old Testament. The prophets' words were like an arrow shot through time. Those who saw it fly initially might have known a bit of its meaning but it wasn't until the arrow landed hundreds of years into the future that the **full** meaning of the prophecy was understood.

People have run the statistical likelihood of a man matching the 300 Old Testament prophecies about Jesus and it is so statistically unlikely that the best explanation is that Jesus was a miracle. Let me show you three of these prophetic arrows that relate to Jesus' birth.

Born in Bethlehem

Micah 5:2 foretells it and Matthew 2:1 describes it.

"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."

... Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ...

Predicted by Micah; then it occurred in Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

Did anything unusual occur in order for Jesus' mother to be in Bethlehem at the time of childbirth? Yes, because she didn't live there! Throughout The Story we've seen God's sovereign hand moving nations to accomplish his will and this is another example. God did this when Joseph went to Egypt and eventually saved his entire family from the famine by bringing them to Egypt too. God did this with Babylon, using this pagan nation to send the Northern Kingdom into exile.

Fast forward to the time of Jesus' birth. At just the right time, God moved the emperor of Rome to call for a census. This brought Joseph and his very pregnant wife Mary to Bethlehem, the prophesied city of the birth of the Messiah.

*O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above your deep and dreamless sleep,
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light,
The hopes and fears of all the years,
Are met in thee tonight.*

Obviously, lots of boys were born in Bethlehem. So there needs to be other prophecies to show that Jesus was the Messiah. The 2nd prophetic arrow shot was that Jesus would be a...

Descendant of David

Jeremiah 23:5 foretells it and Matthew 1:6 & 16 describe it.

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land."

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon the father of Rehoboam, ... and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

It was because of prophecies like Jeremiah's that the Israelites were expecting their Messiah to be in the lineage of David. This explains why Matthew started his Gospel with such a seeming boring beginning. We skip the long genealogy! But to the Israelite, that genealogy screams out Messiah, Messiah!

And it was from prophecies like Jeremiah's that they determined that their Messiah would not just be a king but he'd be the Ultimate King; he would rule wisely and justly. He would finally

rule the nation of Israel with the glory and splendor that God's nation deserved.

Questions like these would have shaped Israel's logic. Since our God is all-powerful, shouldn't his nation be all-powerful? Since God created everything, shouldn't he have the rightful ownership of everything? Since our God is the true and only God, shouldn't all nations bow before him and worship him?

And the answer is "yes." So they waited and longed for the day it would come. The 3rd prophetic arrow shot was that Jesus would be...

Born to a virgin

Isaiah 7:14 foretells it and Luke 1:26–35 describes it.

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 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, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

This is a good example of how the Israelite's expectations were small in comparison to God's coming reality. All of the Israelites thought the Messiah would be this great, earthly king and spiritual leader. Instead, God was giving them a great, heavenly king. And in order for God's Messiah to be born fully a man, without the sin of Adam passed along to him, he had to be conceived without sin. So God did something here that no one anticipated. God planted the seed of Jesus into Mary's womb.

These three arrows, shot by the prophets, give historical validation to the birth of Jesus. God wanted his people to see that Jesus was the Messiah that everyone had been waiting for. But God knew that as intellectually sound as these and hundreds of other prophecies are, some might miss it. So God also relied upon the direct approach too.

The Direct Announcement of Jesus

On the night Jesus was born, angels appeared to some shepherds out in the fields.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about” (Luke 2:10-15).

That’s pretty direct and clear, isn’t it.

When Jesus was 33 days old his parents took him with them to the temple in Jerusalem because by Old Testament law Mary had to receive the purification rites, as described in Leviticus 12. Jesus was there but he wasn’t the main reason for this visit. The Old Testament law required Mary to be there. It was a custom, not a law, to bring a newborn male. In the crowd at the temple was a man named Simeon, a devout follower of God.

It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah (Luke 2:26).

At that moment, in the busy temple, the Holy Spirit came upon him when he saw Jesus in Mary’s arms. And the Holy Spirit came upon him and he walked over to Mary.

Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:28-33).

This was another direct confirmation that Jesus was in fact the long anticipated Messiah!

One more example. When John the Baptist was in prison waiting for his execution he sent a message to Jesus.

“Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” (Luke 7:20).

John was asking, “Jesus, are you the Messiah?”

Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed,

the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor” (Luke 7:22).

Isaiah 29:18 — The **eyes** of the blind will see

Isaiah 35:5 — the **ears** of the deaf will be unstopped

Isaiah 35:6 — the **lame** will leap like a deer, the mute tongue will shout for joy

Isaiah 61:1 — the **good news** will be proclaimed to the poor

In countless ways Jesus revealed that he was the long-awaited Messiah. He did what no one expected—he took on flesh. The people no longer had to hear God’s word through a prophet. They could hear them directly from Jesus’ mouth. The people no longer had to rely upon a priest to represent them in the holy of holies. They could touch God and look directly upon him.

Throughout his teaching and ministry of healing people and performing miracles, Jesus was constantly telling and showing that he was the Messiah. In Jesus we finally saw the full plan of God.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

In this statement Jesus is saying:

The Way. Jesus’ own way was the suffering on the cross, so that we wouldn’t have to suffer the penalty of our rebellion against God. He became the way for everyone else. As the Lamb of God, he took away the sin of the world.

The Truth. He embodied ultimate and perfect truth. It’s not simply that he spoke truth, which he did. And we can do that too. He could speak nothing but truth because he was truth.

The Life. Because he rose from the dead and never died, he defeated the power that death holds over humanity. Remember, in the very beginning, Adam and Eve brought the curse of death onto all of us by their rebellion against God. Because of that, we experience two types of death: physical death and spiritual death. Because of Jesus’ defeat over death, he has provided to anyone who would believe in him the ability to defeat spiritual death too. We can have spiritual life, through him, meaning we can live in eternity with him.

Through both Old Testament prophecies and direct announcements, the validity of Jesus as the Messiah was established and clear. God had determined to finally bring a conclusion to all of humanity’s anticipations.

Earlier we were talking about anticipation. You guys had some great examples of things you have looked forward to. So have I!

I recall the excitement and anticipation the first time I was going to Maui for a golfing trip. My dad and I were going to stay at the Grand Wailea, one of the premier resort hotels in the world. My dad and I were going to play golf for four days straight on golf

courses that the professionals play: the Plantation at Kapalua and the Wailea Golf Club.

The trip lived up to my expectations. It was thrilling when I was making good golf shots! It was relaxing when I was reading my book pool-side. It was all-together heavenly when I got a hot rock massage at the Grand Wailea spa.

But something unexpected occurred.

After repeating this trip now over 10 times, my anticipation level has dropped. My surge of excitement is less intense. I would describe the experience as "normal." What was once the most exciting experience has now become familiar. That's how everything is, except knowing and experiencing Jesus.

Jesus knows that nothing in this earth will sustain our excitement forever. Everything becomes normal over time. But Jesus is never normal. Jesus wants you to direct all of your hope and all of your anticipation toward him and you will never be disappointed. He offers to satisfy you in the moment and blow you away with new discoveries.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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