
History is His Story



MANY PEOPLE pretend to be someone they're not. Actors and actresses make a good living at it. Criminals go to jail for it. Spies stay alive by doing it well. Famous people have impersonators. Jesus Christ is no exception; He has had more impersonators throughout history than anyone else.

Hundreds of false messiahs have arisen, claiming to be the Messiah or accepting the title from followers. But there has only been one genuine Messiah in history. How do we know He was the real Messiah? Bible prophecies written centuries before He was born accurately revealed details of His birth, life and death with 100 percent accuracy!

Thoughts to Remember:

- ♦ **"For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many"** (Matthew 24:5). How can we know the real Christ? We can easily find more than 40 prophecies about Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection in God's Word. These prophecies only fit one person in history--the true Messiah.
- ♦ We can't hope to keep up with all the false people and ideas on this earth, so we focus on the genuine, and all the false messiahs fall away. (But we are given signs of false prophets and false christs in the Scriptures, as well—so we have no reason to fall for a fake!)
- ♦ Not long after Christ's time on this earth, a false messiah arose, a Jewish mercenary soldier named Bar Kochba. Claiming he would deliver Israel from the Romans, he commanded an army and fought the Romans for 3 1/2 years. It ended in total defeat. Down through history, false messiahs have arisen and then faded away.
- ♦ Just as false prophets and messiahs appeared in ancient times, the Bible tells us more will appear at the end of time. Even some of God's people will be deceived. How important that we be prepared! **"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect"** (Matthew 24:24).
- ♦ Later we'll study the signs of the counterfeits. We'll focus now on the genuine article. Keep in mind the claims Christ made about Himself—that He was God! If Christ was merely a good man or a philosopher, it might be helpful to follow Him, but it doesn't really mean much. But if He is divine, to reject Him means losing eternal life.

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♦ While most biographies are written after a person's death, many details of Christ's life were written long before He was born on this earth. Here are some of the prophecies about Christ:

■ He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Micah lived 700 years before Christ.

■ He would be born to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). Isaiah lived 600 years before Christ.

■ "There shall a star come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17). Moses wrote this 1,500 years before Christ came to earth! Revelation calls

Jesus the bright and morning star. Jesus' lineage was from Israel.

■ Isaiah also wrote that the Messiah would preach good tidings to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to captives, proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,

and comfort those who mourn. Jesus did all of this—it is recorded in the Bible.

■ Christ would be betrayed by a friend. "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who

shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9). David, the psalmist,

wrote this 1,000 years before Christ. How did David know Jesus would be betrayed

by a friend, not an enemy?

■ "So they weighed for my price 30 pieces of silver, and I took the 30 pieces of silver,

and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zechariah 11:12, 13). Judas

betrayed Jesus for precisely 30 pieces of silver (not gold). Then Judas, in regret and

bitterness of heart, threw the silver to the floor before the priests. The priests bought a

potter's field with the money, to bury strangers in (Matthew 27:5, 7). An exact

prophecy in every particular! Zechariah predicted these precise facts 100 years

before Christ.

■ "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my

beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6). The gospels tell

us this is just what happened. Jesus was beaten, mocked, and spat upon.

■ "...They pierced my hands and my feet" (Psalm 22:16). David lived 1,000 years before

Christ, and the Romans didn't introduce crucifixion until about a hundred years before

Christ. How did David know this?

■ "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they did cast lots"

(Psalm 22:18). Soldiers traditionally cast lots for the belongings of crucified criminals

and divided the booty.

■ "The guards all his bones: not one of them is broken" (Psalm 34:20). This was fulfilled

as described in John 19:32, 33: "Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the

first and of the other who was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and

saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs."

The "take-home" message for you . . .

Just between you . . . and God:

♦ Jesus is knocking at the door of your life. He's still the problem solver, the forgiving Savior, the life-changing miracle worker. Spend a private moment with God. Forget about everyone else; shut out everything but Jesus. Talk to Him personally, just the way you'd talk to a friend—because He is your best Friend. You've known something is missing. It is Christ's presence and power, His mercy and forgiveness. He's just waiting to give you everything you need.

Christ rose. The tomb is empty. Because He lives, you can too—for eternity.

God's Word was inspired by the Holy Spirit, who led these prophets to speak about Jesus' birth, life, and death as if they were there personally! Christ is the genuine Messiah. "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).

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