

The Life and Times of Jesus Christ

2

The Divinity of the Messiah

We have begun an incredible journey of discovery. This journey doesn't just encompass the twelve lessons of **Module 112**. It encompasses your whole life. Your discovery of Christ began in earnest when you first heard the Gospel, and it will continue into the farthest reaches of eternity. Indeed, the depths of potential for discovery in Christ are literally limitless. In **Colossians 2:2-3**, Paul writes:

“My purpose is that [you] may...have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Christ is like a bottom-less treasure chest. No matter how deep you dig, there are always more riches to discover. Even concerning his earthly life, John declared, with just a hint of hyperbole, in **John 21:25**:

“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”

But every path of discovery must have a starting point, and the starting point for our journey of discovery in **Module 112** is not, as you might suppose, the birth of Jesus. The story begins much, much earlier than that. It begins in eternity past – before even the creation of the world.

Christ Before His Birth

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”

A Portrait of the Messiah

The Divinity of the Messiah

The Birth of the Messiah

The Childhood of the Messiah

The People of the Messiah

The Inauguration of the Messiah

The Opposition to the Messiah

The Last Week of the Messiah

The Trial of the Messiah

The Death of the Messiah

The Resurrection of the Messiah

The Ascendancy of the Messiah

So begins John's Gospel account. And in these two verses, we catch a glimpse of the majesty of this person we have come to know as Jesus. For despite what some scholars may think, this was no ordinary man. He was not merely a reformist Jewish rabbi misunderstood and misinterpreted by future generations. He was God himself, coming in the flesh.

John 1:14 describes the advent of Jesus in divine terms. This verse is pivotal in our perception of Christ, and the *New King James Version* translates it in this way:

“And the Word *became flesh* and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

We cannot escape the fact that the writers of the New Testament viewed the birth of Christ not as the beginning of his life, but as the beginning of his earthly stay with humanity. These writers boldly declare that Christ was pre-existent. In other words, he was alive long before he was physically conceived. And they have a solid basis for this belief, for Jesus himself makes this astounding declaration in **John 8:58**:

“I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!”

As we saw in **ES104-04**, the words that Jesus used to describe his pre-existence are loaded with meaning.

- Firstly, Jesus did not say, “Before Abraham was born, I *was*.” His use of the expression “I am” indicates an ever-continuing existence outside of the bounds of time as we know it.
- Secondly, every Jew who heard Jesus' words knew that he was claiming divinity, for the term “I am” was the covenant name for God himself (see **Exodus 3:14**). This is the root meaning of the Hebrew name for God – YHWH (pronounced Yahweh or, traditionally, Jehovah).

No wonder his Jewish opponents took up stones to kill him. Yet Jesus was not committing blasphemy, as they supposed. He was simply declaring a truth about himself, a truth ratified there and then by the miracles he performed (**John 10:25,38**) and later vindicated by his resurrection (**Romans 1:4**).

And as we saw in **ES108-08**, this declaration by Jesus, referring to himself as the eternal “I am,” has a far-reaching impact upon how he expects us to view him. For Jesus is describing himself as:

- Pre-existent
- Self-existent

Albert Barnes makes this comment on the use of the divine name “I am”:

“[It] denotes continued existence without respect to time, so far as [God] is concerned. We divide time into the past, the present, and the future. The expression, applied to God, denotes that he does not measure his existence in this manner, but that the word by which we express the present denotes his continued and unchanging existence.”²

This “continued and unchanging existence” is also applied Jesus to himself. And the Bible goes on to build upon this foundation revelation, revealing that:

- Christ is unchanging (**Hebrews 13:8**) – a divine attribute (**Malachi 3:6**).
- Christ created the world (**John 1:3; Colossians 1:16**).
- Christ is supreme over all creation (**Ephesians 1:20-21; Colossians 1:17**).
- Christ fully reveals God (**John 1:18; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3**).
- Christ is God (**John 1:1-2; 20:28; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1**).

This one simple fact – that Christ existed before he was born – must immediately color our perception of his conception and birth. For every child that is born into this world does so involuntarily due to an act of procreation on the part of his or her parents. Except one. Jesus alone was born into this world by his own volition!

Read Philippians 2:6-8

This passage spells out the birth of Christ as an act of will, a decision made on his part. From these verses, we discover this about his birth:

- Christ was in nature God (**verse 6**).
- Christ was equal with God (**verse 6**).
- Christ temporarily relinquished his divine status (**verse 6-7**).
- Christ was born in human form (**verse 7**).
- Christ further humbled himself by becoming a servant (**verse 7**).
- Christ’s humility found its final expression in shameful death (**verse 8**).

How did Christ relinquish his divine status? This has been the subject of debate for many centuries. **Philippians 2:7** indicates that he “emptied himself” of his divine nature or, as the NIV puts it, “he made himself nothing.”

Read Philippians 2:9-11

These verses round off Paul’s description of Christ. They form a complete circle:

- Total humility (**verses 6-8**)
- Total exaltation (**verses 9-11**)

Total humility

Christ emptied himself of his divine status in three stages:

- **Stage 1:** He took on human form (and identified with humanity)
- **Stage 2:** He took on servant status (and identified with the downtrodden)
- **Stage 3:** He took on a criminal’s death (and identified with the wicked)

The full impact of this deliberate act of humility is expressed by J B Phillips in *The New Testament in Modern English*:

“For [Christ], who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his prerogatives as God’s equal, but stripped himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as mortal man. And, having become man, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, and the death he died was the death of a common criminal.”

Total exaltation

But the incredible news of the Gospel is that this act of humility had a glorious counterpart. God the Father exalted his Son also in three stages:

- **Stage 1:** He exalted Christ from death to life
- **Stage 2:** He exalted Christ from earth to heaven
- **Stage 3:** He exalted Christ from humility to glory

Even during his time of earthly humility, however, Christ's divine nature constantly shone through in his miracles (see, for example, [Matthew 14:25-32](#)). But there is one time when we are afforded a unique glimpse of Christ's eternal glory.

Read Matthew 17:1-5

Jesus led Peter, James and John onto a mountaintop, where he was transfigured before them. For this brief moment, we see Christ in his pre-incarnation glory.

In [John 17:1,5](#), Jesus prays:

“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you... glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

Jesus was fully aware of what he had given up, and longed to return to the fullness of the glory that belonged by right to him. In [Revelation 1:12-17](#), we see the degree of glory which had belonged to Christ before his birth and into which he re-entered after his ascent into heaven.

“I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw...someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters...His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”

As we read the life story of Jesus, we must always bear in mind this divine backdrop, for without understanding his eternal glory, we will never fully comprehend his words and actions upon the earth.

Christ in the Old Testament

If Christ is indeed pre-existent, then a question naturally arises: Did he make any appearances in the Bible narrative before his birth? Was he just a silent partner in the redemptive plan prior to his incarnation, or was he actively involved in the history leading up to his appearance?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Although Paul is not saying that Christ was literally the rock from which the water flowed, Paul is clearly establishing the presence of Christ in the Old Covenant experience.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:9

The *New King James Version* warns us:

“...nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted [him], and were destroyed by serpents.”

Paul again attributes the rebellion of the Israelites in the wilderness as being against Christ himself.* But what does the Old Testament account tell us? **Numbers 21:5-6** records:

“...they spoke against *God* and against Moses, and said, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!’ Then the *Lord* sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.”

The Hebrew word translated “Lord” in this passage is, in fact, YHWH (pronounced Yahweh), the covenant name of God. When you parallel **1 Corinthians 10:9** and **Numbers 21:5-6**, you discover that Paul is equating Christ with the Yahweh of the Old Testament. As we shall soon see, the term YHWH was not just the name of God the Father, but embraced the whole of the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The weight of Scripture strongly supports a pre-existent Christ who was an active participant in biblical history. But before we examine specific instances of his Old Testament involvement, let’s take a look at what the Gospel accounts tell us.

Read John 1:18

This verse sets the divine “rules of engagement” – the parameters within which God communicates with mankind. We are here told that no one has ever seen God the Father. It is the “only begotten Son” who has declared him.

Read John 5:37

Again speaking of God the Father, Jesus tells his Jewish audience: “You have neither heard His voice *at any time*, nor seen His form” (NKJV).

Read John 6:46

Once again, Jesus declares that no person has ever seen the Father – not even once. Only the Son of God has seen the Father. Yet the Old Testament is clear that there were times when people did see God. So who was it that they saw?

Although not stated specifically, there is a strong case that each time God physically appeared before a human being this was the pre-incarnate Christ.

Remember that prior to his birth, Jesus was called “the Word” (**John 1:1**). This was not a meaningless title given to Christ before the creation of the world, but was rather a description of how he interacted with the world, first at the time of creation and then on through the generations of human history. Whenever God spoke, this was the second person of the Godhead fulfilling his role as the Word of God.

* Although some versions use “Lord” instead of “Christ,” the original Greek uses the word *Christos* – “Christ.”

Let's take a look at these examples.

- **Genesis 17:1** – This verse indicates that God appeared before Abraham in a face-to-face encounter. This wasn't just an disembodied audible voice. It was a physical appearance of some kind. Since the Bible is clear that no one has ever seen the Father, this particular encounter must have been between Abraham and the second person of the Godhead. It also gives special meaning to Jesus' words in **John 8:56**, when he said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad." His Jewish audience knew what he was meaning, for they replied, "You are not yet fifty years old...and you have seen Abraham!" (**John 8:57**).
- **Genesis 18:1-33** – Here we find the same statement, "The Lord appeared to Abraham," but this time a clear description of this appearance is given. Three men approach Abraham and Abraham apparently recognizes one of them as God himself. Two of the men are angels (see **Genesis 19:1**), but the other is identified as YHWH. If this appearance of God before Abraham is correctly identified as being Christ, then the second person of the Godhead is representing the triune God to Abraham. This also confirms that the covenant name YHWH refers to the triune God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit *together*), not just to the Father alone.
- **Exodus 33:11** – This is a most unusual verse, since it is followed almost immediately by Moses' request ("...show me your glory") and God's refusal ("...you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live"). How is it that Moses was able to carry on an intimate "face to face" relationship with God "as a man speaks with a friend" prior to this request? The most likely explanation is that this face-to-face encounter was with the second person of the triune God.

God spoke "at many times and in various ways" (**Hebrews 1:1**) to the people of the Old Covenant. It was not *always* the second person of the triune God who spoke. Later in Israel's history, it was often the *third* person of the triune God – the Holy Spirit – who spoke to mankind (see **2 Peter 1:20-21**). But never fall into the trap of trying to make too clear a distinction between the three persons of the Godhead in matters such as these. Such is their essential unity that one spoke on behalf of the other. And so we discover that the Holy Spirit himself (the third person of the Trinity) is described variously as the Spirit of God (**Genesis 1:2**), the Spirit of YHWH (**Isaiah 11:2**), the Spirit of Jesus (**Acts 16:7**), the Spirit of Christ (**1 Peter 1:11**) and the Spirit of Jesus Christ (**Philippians 1:19**). In fact, **Romans 8:9** equates "the Spirit of God" with "the Spirit of Christ." The unity of the Godhead is absolute. As Jesus himself declared, "The Father and I are one" (**John 10:30**).

The Triune God

Before we continue to look at Christ's participation in Old Testament history, it is worthwhile for us to take a brief detour in order to examine more closely the Bible's description of God as being three-in-one.

The human mind doesn't grasp the concept of the Trinity easily. After all, how can you have three distinct persons in one entity? But in many ways, this is a strong proof that it is not a human invention.

C S Lewis explains his understanding of the Trinity:

“In Christianity God is not a static thing...but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance. The union between the Father and Son is such a live concrete thing that this union itself is a Person...What grows out of the joint life of the Father and Son is a real Person, is, in fact, the Third of the three Persons who are God.”³

You may not agree with C S Lewis' theology, but his is one of many attempts to understand the nature of the triune God. But where did such a concept come from? **Matthew 28:19** lists the three members of the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The only other place that specifically refers to the Trinity is **1 John 5:7** (NKJV), which states:

“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.”

But when it comes to the Old Testament, two questions naturally arise.

Does the Old Testament support the Trinity?

The answer is, “Yes!” Although the Old Testament merely hints at the Trinity, the concept is nevertheless clearly supported. Take a look at these verses:

- **Genesis 1:1** – The word for “God” is *elohim*, which is a *plural* word, not a singular one. In fact, this word is translated “gods” in many other parts of the Old Testament. But whenever this word is used as a name for the one true God, it is almost always followed by a singular verb.* Thus even the ancient Hebrew text supports the plural nature of the one God.
- **Genesis 1:26** – Here is an example of God referring to himself in the plural. In fact, there are times when God appears to discuss an issue with himself as if he were more than one person (see also **Genesis 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8**).
- **Psalms 45:6-7** – Who is this God that David is speaking of? How can God have a God? **Hebrews 1:8-9** interprets this passage for us, telling us that David is referring to Christ, the second person of the triune God. The phrase “God, your God,” therefore, refers to God the Father.

What about **Deuteronomy 6:4**? This verse declares in no uncertain terms:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord (YHWH) your God, the Lord (YHWH) is one.”

This declaration is called the *Shema*, and is the basis of Old Testament theology and the foundational tenet of modern Judaism. But isn't this in conflict with the concept of a triune God, as revealed in the New Testament?

* Interestingly, there are rare occasions when both the plural noun for God and the plural verb are used together (see **Genesis 20:13; 2 Samuel 7:23** and **Psalms 58:11**). This plural combination particularly emphasizes the plural nature of God.

Firstly, we must remember that God is not three. He is three-in-one. Therefore the statement, “the Lord is one” is an accurate revelation of God’s unitary nature.

Secondly, the Hebrew word used for one is ‘*echad*, which has the meaning of unity of substance, not unity of number. In fact, it is quite likely that when Jesus declared, “I and the Father are one” (**John 10:30**), he used the Hebrew word ‘*echad* (or its Aramaic equivalent), the very word used in the *Shema*. No wonder the Jews took up stones to kill him!

Why doesn’t the Old Testament proclaim the Trinity clearly?

It’s one thing to say that the concept of the Trinity is supported by the Old Testament text, but why doesn’t the Old Testament state the doctrine of the Trinity clearly?

The reason is simple. God didn’t want to confuse the issue. It took one thousand years and an exile before Israel finally got the message that there is only one true God, and to introduce the concept of a three-in-one God to a people steeped in polytheism would have been counterproductive. It was only when the Son of God arrived on the scene in human form that the three-in-one nature of God was revealed, for this revelation was now necessary to explain how God could take on human form.

The Angel of the Lord

Let’s now take a look at further instances of Christ appearing within the Old Testament narrative. But before we do, let’s introduce a recurring character in Israel’s history – the Angel of the Lord.

Read Exodus 3:1-6

In this passage, Moses meets God personally for the first time. In fact, God introduces himself to Moses as “the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” But even though **verse 4** tells us that God called out to Moses from the burning bush, **verse 2** explains that it was the “angel of the Lord (YHWH)” who appeared to Moses in the flames of the bush. Who was this “angel of the Lord” and why is he equated with God?

Throughout Scripture, the Angel of the Lord appears as the direct representative of God, and is almost always given divine status. Let’s take a look at two examples.

Read Judges 13

Here we find the story of God announcing the birth of Samson to his parents. But look at what the account says.

- ➔ **Verse 3** – The “angel of the Lord” appears to Samson’s mother.
- ➔ **Verse 6** – At first, Samson’s mother doesn’t believe this “angel” to be God himself. She describes him to her husband in this way: “A man of God came to me. He looked like an angel of God, very awesome.”

- **Verse 16** – The Angel of the Lord distinguishes himself from YHWH, but the verse ends in the parenthetical explanation: “Manoah did not realize that it was the angel of the Lord (YHWH).”
- **Verses 17-18** – When asked for his name, the Angel of the Lord declares “it is beyond understanding” (NIV) or “it is secret” (KJV). But the word translated “beyond understanding” or “secret” is a variant of the word translated “Wonderful” in **Isaiah 9:6**. This is one of the names of Christ.
- **Verses 19-20** – When Manoah and his wife sacrifice a burnt offering to the Lord, the Angel of the Lord ascends in the flame.
- **Verses 21-22** – At this point, the account tells us, Manoah realizes that he has been speaking with the Angel of the Lord, but notice Manoah’s exclamation: “We are doomed to die!...We have seen God!” Once again, the Angel of the Lord is equated with the God himself.

Read Joshua 5:13-6:2

In this account, Joshua comes face to face with a person called “the commander of the army of the Lord (YHWH).” Again we notice some interesting things taking place during this encounter:

- **5:14** – When this commander introduces himself, Joshua falls to his face in worship, yet the commander does not rebuke him for this, even though angels consistently refuse the worship of man (note **Revelation 22:8-9**).
- **5:15** – The “captain of the Lord’s host” (KJV) commands Joshua: “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” This is an almost word-for-word repeat of what the Angel of the Lord commanded Moses from the burning bush. This was an account that Joshua knew well, and the statement was clearly intended to identify this “commander of the army of the Lord” with the “angel of the Lord” who appeared in the burning bush.
- **6:2** – The Lord (YHWH) now begins to instruct Joshua on God’s strategy for the taking of Jericho. We need to remember that there were no chapter divisions in the original Hebrew text. There is no interruption in the narrative between **chapter 5** and **chapter 6**. Thus once again we see the “commander of [YHWH’s] army” being equated with YHWH himself.

As Jamieson, Fausset and Brown explain:

“...The address and the adoration of Joshua, the holiness communicated to the spot by the presence of this Personage, and the application to him of the name Jehovah (**6:2**), identify Him with *the* Angel of the Lord...”⁴

Who is this “commander of the armies of the Lord”? **Revelation 19:11-14** reveals his identity:

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His

eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.”

Read Daniel 10:4-18

Once again, this passage reveals some interesting facts about the messenger sent by God.

- **Verses 5-6** – The description of this man is essentially identical to the description of the glorified Christ in **Revelation 1:12-16**.
- **Verses 8-9** – Daniel’s reaction to the sight of this glorious man is the same as John’s reaction in **Revelation 1:17**.

If we are correct in equating the Angel of the Lord with the pre-incarnate Christ,* then take a look at the instances where Christ is actively involved in Old Testament history.

- The creation of the world (**Genesis 1; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16**)
- The protection of Hagar and Ishmael (**Genesis 16:7-11**)
- The confirmation of the covenant with Abraham (**Genesis 17:1**)
- The appearance to Abraham before Sodom’s destruction (**Genesis 18**)
- The aborted sacrifice of Isaac (**Genesis 22:11-18**)
- The appearance to Moses in the burning bush (**Exodus 3:1-6; Acts 7:30,35**)
- The giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses (**Acts 7:38**)
- The vanguard of Israel in the wilderness (**Exodus 23:20-23**)
- The encounter with Balaam’s donkey (**Genesis 22:22-35**)
- The declaration to Israel after entering the promised land (**Judges 2:1-5**)
- The appearance to Gideon (**Judges 6:11-40**)
- The appearance to Samson’s parents (**Judges 13**)
- The judgment against Israel because of David’s sin (**2 Samuel 24:15-25**)
- The strengthening of Elijah (**1 Kings 19:1-8**)
- The word to Elijah concerning Ahaziah (**2 Kings 1:2-4,15**)
- The destruction of the Assyrian forces (**2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36**)
- The visions given to Zechariah (**Zechariah 1:8-17; 3:1-10**)

These are just some of the possible instances of Christ’s involvement in human history prior to his incarnation.

Did the Jews Believe in a Divine Messiah?

Now we come to a very important question. Did the Jews of the first century believe that the Messiah would be divine? Historians have commonly responded to this question with a “No!” But there are indications that a divine Messiah (in

* This doesn’t mean, of course, that Christ is a created being or just a higher order of angel. The word “angel” simply means “messenger,” and can be used to refer to a spiritual being (traditionally called an angel), a human being or, in this case, Christ himself.

other words, a Savior who was God incarnate) was not outside the range of first century thinking.

Firstly, they had the prophecies of the Old Testament. **Isaiah 9:6** (NKJV) proclaims:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

The titles “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father,” in particular, have strong divine connotations. But that’s not all. As we have already seen, **Psalms 45:6-7** declares:

“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”

And in **Matthew 22:41-46**, Jesus himself used the prophecy of **Psalms 110:1** to underline the divine status of the Messiah:

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?’ ‘The son of David,’ they replied. He said to them, ‘How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him “Lord”? For he says, “The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.”’ If then David calls him “Lord,” how can he be his son?’ No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.”

And one of the most important messianic prophecies, **Micah 5:2**, declares not only the birthplace of the Messiah but also his pre-existence:

“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.*”

As the *New King James Version* renders it:

“...Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, *Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.*”

But one of the most interesting windows on first century Jewish thinking comes not from the Bible but from apocryphal literature. In the *Psalms of Solomon*, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Messiah is described as being without sin, taught by God and “powerful in the Holy Spirit.” 1 Enoch 48:6-7 declares:

“For this purpose he became the Chosen One; he was concealed in the presence of the Lord of Spirits prior to the creation of the world, and for eternity. He has revealed the wisdom of the Lord of the Spirits to the righteous and holy ones...”

The fragmentary text 4Q246 (Aramaic Apocalypse) states:

“He shall be hailed as the son of God, and they shall call him the son of the most high.”

And an apocryphal prophecy called *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*,⁵ penned by an anonymous Pharisee in the second century BC, also casts light upon the Jewish mindset of the day. While there is much in this book that is obviously *not* divinely inspired, there are some passages that are amazing in their foresight. Take a look at this sample, and remember: This was written over 100 years before Christ’s birth.

- ☞ “*For the Lord God shall appear on earth, and Himself save men. Then shall all the spirits of deceit be given to be trodden under foot, and men shall rule over wicked spirits. Then shall I arise in joy, and will bless the Most High, because of his marvelous works, because God hath taken a body and eaten with men and saved men.*”
- ☞ “*...From Judah as it were a King, God and man, He shall save all the Gentiles and the race of Israel.*”
- ☞ “*And behold I am clear from your ungodliness and transgression, which ye shall commit in the end of the ages against the Savior of the world, Christ, acting godlessly, deceiving Israel, and stirring up against it great evils from the Lord. And ye shall deal lawlessly together with Israel, so He shall not bear with Jerusalem because of your wickedness; but the veil of the temple shall be rent, so as not to cover your shame. And ye shall be scattered as captives among the Gentiles, and shall be for a reproach and for a curse there.*”
- ☞ “*And a man who reneweth the law in the power of the Most High, ye shall call a deceiver; and at last ye shall rush upon him to slay him, not knowing his dignity, taking innocent blood through wickedness upon your heads. And your holy places shall be laid waste even to the ground because of him.*”
- ☞ “*Then shall the Lord raise up a new priest. And to him all the words of the Lord shall be revealed...And his star shall arise in heaven as of a king. Lighting up the light of knowledge as the sun the day, and he shall be magnified in the world...And the angels of the glory of the presence of the Lord shall be glad in him. The heavens shall be opened, and from the temple of glory shall come upon him sanctification, with the Father’s voice as from Abraham to Isaac. And the glory of the Most High shall be uttered over him, and the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him in the water.*”
- ☞ “*And there shall be none succeed him for all generations for ever. And in his priesthood the Gentiles shall be multiplied in knowledge upon the earth, and enlightened through the grace of the Lord. In his priesthood shall sin come to an end, and the lawless shall cease to do evil. And he shall open the gates of paradise and shall remove the threatening sword against Adam, and he shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life, and the spirit of*

holiness shall be upon them. And Beliar shall be bound by him, and he shall give power to His children to tread upon the evil spirits.”

- ☞ “And after these things shall a star arise to you from Jacob in peace. And a man shall arise from [Judah’s] seed, like the sun of righteousness, *walking with the sons of men in meekness and righteousness. And no sin shall be found in him.* And the heavens shall be opened unto him, to pour out the spirit, even the blessing of the Holy Father; and *He shall pour out the spirit of grace upon you.*”
- ☞ “And then shall we also rise, each one over our tribe, worshiping the King of heaven, *who appeared upon earth in the form of a man in humility.* And as many as believe on Him on the earth shall rejoice with Him...And the Lord shall judge Israel first, for their unrighteousness; *for when He appeared as God in the flesh to deliver them they believed Him not.* and then He shall judge all the Gentiles, as many as believed Him not when He appeared on the earth.”
- ☞ “Until the consummation of the age shall he be in the synagogues of the Gentiles, and among their rulers, as a strain of music in the mouth of all. And he shall be *inscribed in the holy books, both his work and his word,* and he shall be a chosen one of God for ever.”

Remember: This is not Scripture. But it is a testament to the prophetic insight of the writer and, since copies of this literature were extant in the time of Jesus, it also reveals the messianic expectation among the Jews of Jesus’ day. Manuscripts like the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* formed part of the religious tapestry that acted as a backdrop to the coming of the Messiah.

Did the Jews of Jesus’ day believe the Messiah to be divine? It probably would have been hotly debated among the scribes and rabbis, but without question a divine Messiah was not a foreign concept.

With this background, we are now ready to take our first step into the life of the historical Jesus. In the next lesson, we will look at the circumstances of Christ’s conception and birth, and how he fulfilled the many prophecies concerning the coming Messiah.

¹ Homer G. Rhea, Jr, quoted by Edythe Draper, *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, extracted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

² Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*, John 8:58, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

³ C S Lewis, quoted by Edythe Draper, *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, extracted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

⁴ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical*, Volume I, Part 2, p.13.

⁵ *The Lost Books of the Bible and the Forgotten Books of Eden* (World Bible Publishers, 1927), pp.220-269.

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