christian WORKER

"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

Volume 101, Number 11 8900 Manchaca Road, Austin, TX 78748 November 2015

The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy

Don Walker

How thrilling it must have been to be able to walk with Cleopas and Jesus on the road to Emmaus when Jesus began "at Moses and all the prophets, [and] expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). It is no wonder their hearts burned within them when He opened up to them the Scriptures (Luke 24:32). There is no greater subject than Jesus the Christ, nor is there any greater pursuit than to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10).

The prophets discussed all significant matters concerning the life of Jesus Christ. The life of our Savior was set forth in the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures for all who had access to see. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). So when Moses wrote the Books of Law he wrote of Jesus. When the poets wrote the Wisdom Literature, they wrote of Jesus, and when the prophets wrote their God given messages, they too wrote of Jesus. When John fell down to worship the angel in Revelation 19, the angel responded, "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

Passages such as Genesis 3:15, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 53 are but a very small fragment of that which proclaimed Christ hundreds and even thousands of years before "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Not only do these passages exist, but they also served and serve as a great evangelistic tool. When Paul went into Thessalonica "as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead" (Acts 17:2, 3). Which sermon in the Book of Acts does not go back to the Old Testament and tie those passages to Jesus Christ himself? That which the prophets wrote concerning Christ was searched and proclaimed as authoritative concerning the Lord. These were the words, not of experts, but of men who were inspired of God – the very words of our God. However, what is truly mesmerizing is the fact that the prophets did not benefit from their own words as much as those who would come after them. Peter spoke of the salvation of which we take part in and said this concerning the prophets.

> Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed,

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Cody Westbrook

"We are workers together with Him…" (2 Cor. 6:1)

Genesis 3:15: The Seed of Woman

When God created man, He placed him in the Garden. It was an actual paradise—a place where all of his needs were met and no sickness or sorrow could be found. Yet it would not last. Genesis 3:1-6 reveals that the tempter was successful in seducing the first couple (2 Cor. 11:3) to violate God's will, and consequently sin entered the world and death by it (Rom. 5:12). Genesis 3:6 is a pivotal passage for mankind. Previously, man stood in fellowship with God. But when he sinned man forfeited his holiness, which made that fellowship impossible (Hab. 1:13). However, God's revelation in Genesis 3:15 provided hope. This is the pivotal passage for Jehovah. In speaking to the serpent He said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." Ephesians 3:9-11 reveals that God's plan for redeeming man from the power of sin had been in His mind from eternity. This Divine arrangement would eventuate in Christ's victory over sin and the grave through His death and resurrection. The Messianic seed promise of Genesis 3:15 is humanity's first glimpse into how that plan would unfold.

Through process of elimination, God identified the meaning of the seed promise. Man was eliminated in Genesis 3:15 when God specified that the seed would be the woman's. In Genesis 12:2-3 we find a two-fold promise made to Abraham. God said that He would multiply Abraham's descendants, and make them a nation. And, through that nation, Abraham's seed, all families of the earth would be blessed. In Genesis 21:12 God specified even further when He said, "… for in Isaac shall thy seed by called." He would later reveal that it would not be through Isaac's son Esau, that the seed promise would be continued, but rather through Jacob (Num. 24:17). And, of Jacob's 12 sons, Judah is identified as the one through whom Messiah would come (Gen. 49:10). The prophet Isaiah revealed that a "Branch" would come forth from the line of Jesse (Isa. 11:1). Jehovah made a promise to Jesse's son, David, that He would set up his seed after him and establish His kingdom forever (2 Sam. 7:12-15). It was that promise that Peter had in mind in Acts 2:30 when he said of David, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne."

In the garden Jehovah said that Messiah would come from the seed of woman. Isaiah later built upon that promise when he wrote, "…Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). Matthew would reveal its ultimate fulfillment in Matthew 1:23 when he applied it to the child born of the Holy Ghost, to Mary (Mt. 1:18), Jesus the Christ. Paul summarized when he wrote, "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4). The promise that was made in the garden was fulfilled in the virgin birth of Son of God, and we are the beneficiaries of it. Paul looked back in Galatians 3:16 when he said, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." When we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27) we become His; "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). Because the seed of woman was victorious over the enemy of the soul, you and I are drawn near to God (Eph. 2:13), and made part of His family (Eph. 1:5). "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

CW

CHRISTIAN WORKER

(UPS 109-700)

Third-Class Postage Paid at Manchaca, Texas

Published on a Non-Profit basis by the

Southwest church of Christ, 8900 Manchaca Rd., Austin, TX 78748

christianworker.us E-mail: office@swcofc.org

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Editorial Address: 8900 Manchaca Rd., Austin, TX 78748

Single Subscriptions ---------- $6.00 per year

In Clubs of five or more ---------- $5.50 per year

Per family on the Congregation Plan ---------- $5.00 yearly

In a bundle to a congregation or individual ---------- $0.75 each

Foreign (Air Mail postage) ---------- $17.00 per year

Isaiah 7:14: Did Isaiah Prophesy the Virgin Birth of Christ?

Wayne Jackson

Does Isaiah 7:14 contain a prophecy of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ? Some suggest that Isaiah's statement refers to a 'young woman' (not necessarily a 'virgin') of his day, who would conceive and give birth to a child, and that this event would be a sign to Hezekiah. It is then further said that Matthew took that text and applied it to Jesus' birth, though, allegedly, this was not the meaning of the passage originally. How do we respond to this assertion?

This theory contains so many flaws that it is difficult to know where to begin in refuting it. It can be traced ultimately back to the second century A.D., when it was employed by those who repudiated the concept of predictive prophecy that pointed to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. It has been filtered down, revised and refined over the years, so that some Christians now "parrot" the theory — though they haven't a clue that the "young woman" notion was birthed from the womb of skepticism. As briefly as we can, we note the following points.

The background of the prophecy

When the kingdom of Judah was threatened by a confederation of enemies from the north, King Ahaz was terrified. God sent the prophet Isaiah to calm the king. The prophet declared that the evil forces would not prevail. Ahaz was encouraged to "ask for a sign" documenting this word of consolation, but the stubborn king refused.

Isaiah then directed his attention to the "house of David." He promised a much greater "sign," namely "the virgin" would conceive and bear a son, whose name, Immanuel, would signify "God is with us." The time-frame that it would take for the Immanuel-child to reach the age of accountability was used as a chronological measurement. Before that time-span would expire, Judah's current threat would dissipate (which reality came to pass). More importantly, however, was the fact that a much greater deliverance was needed in Israel, and such would be provided by the actual arrival of Immanuel — who is Jesus Christ.

A "Sign"

This prophesied event is designated as a "sign." The term "sign" is a point of controversy. While the word itself does not demand a "miracle" on a strictly etymological basis, a word's meaning is determined by more than etymology alone. General usage and context (both immediate and remote) must be factored in. The immediate context does suggest a **miracle**. The king had been challenged to ask for a "sign," either "in the depth, or in the height above" (11). This indicates something phenomenal. Ahaz refused the proffered "sign," claiming that such would "tempt" Jehovah (again hinting of the supernatural). Additionally, Matthew's **inspired interpretation** of the passage clearly establishes the miraculous nature of the prediction (Mt. 1:22-23). There is no evidence at all that there was a miraculous birth to a virgin in the days of Isaiah.

A virgin

The Hebrew word rendered "virgin" is almah. It is the only biblical word that truly signifies a virgin. Prof. William Beck, who researched this matter with great precision, declared:

> I have searched exhaustively for instances in which almah might mean a non-virgin or a married woman. There is no passage where almah is not a virgin. Nowhere in the Bible or elsewhere does almah mean anything but a virgin. (1967,6.)

Robert Dick Wilson, the incomparable Hebrew scholar who was proficient in forty-five biblically-related languages, declared that almah "never meant 'young married woman,'" and that the presumption of common law is that every almah is virtuous, unless she can be proved not to be (1926, 316). Even the Jewish scholar, Cyrus H. Gordon, who made some of the archaeological discoveries at Ras Shamra, conceded that recent archaeological evidence confirms that almah means "virgin" (1953, 106). The notion that almah merely signifies a "young woman" was first argued by the anti-Christian Jew, Trypho, in the mid-second century A.D (Justin Martyr, 67).

"The virgin shall conceive"

Isaiah's text plainly says "the virgin" (note the definite article, denoting a **specific** virgin) "shall conceive." The passage 1 does not speak of a virgin who would marry (thus surrendering her virginity) and then conceive. She conceives **as a virgin.** If this alluded to some contemporary of Isaiah, who was the

mysterious lady? Were there two virgin births — one in Isaiah's day, and another involving Jesus? There is no credibility to this view. Additionally, the virgin's child was to be called "Immanuel," which signifies "God is with us." If this name applied to a child in Isaiah's day, who was this illusive youngster? He seems to have vanished as soon as he was born!

Matthew mistaken?

The suggestion made by some, that Matthew took Isaiah's text and gave it an application alien to the original meaning, is unworthy of a correct view of Bible inspiration. Preachers today who take a text, extract it from its context, and make it a mere pretext for points they wish to establish, are strongly chastised and their credibility is compromised. Yet men, under the sway of modernism, do not hesitate to so charge God's inspired apostle in the case of the virgin birth. This is a shameful circumstance.

Historical evidence

The "church fathers" were of one mind that Jesus was born of a virgin, and Isaiah 7:14 was appealed to as an Old Testament prophetic proof-text. For example, Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202) wrote:

> Wherefore also the Lord Himself gave us a sign, in the depth below, and in the height above, which man did not ask for, because he never expected that a virgin could conceive, or that it was possible that one remaining a virgin could bring forth a son, and that what was thus born should be God with us?

Early scholarship, "rational" influence

The earlier scholars of Christendom (e.g., Calvin, Lowth, Gill, Henry, Clarke, Alexander, Hengstenberg, etc.,) argued that Isaiah 7:14 was **exclusively messianic** in its import. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, as the influence of German rationalism made its presence felt, both in Europe and in America, even writers who were generally considered "conservative" began to yield to the pressure. They thus suggested that perhaps Matthew only "applied" Isaiah's text to the circumstances, when, in reality, there was a primary application to a "young woman" of the prophet's own day.

Edward J. Young's masterful, three-volume set on the book of Isaiah (Eerdmans, 1965) was driven by a desire to refute this compromising drift — to which even some in the Lord's family have fallen victim. There is no reason for the Lord's people to resort to such textual manipulations in dealing with the biblical evidence for the birth of the Savior.

For further study, see the author's chapters in *The Living Messages of the Books of the Old Testament* (Isaiah), and *The Living Messages of the Books of the New Testament* (Matthew), in the *Spiritual Sword Lectureship* books (1977 and 1976 respectively). See also the small volume by Prof. Edward E. Hinson, *Isaiah's Immanuel* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1978). It is a valuable resource.

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CW

Micah 5:2: Born in Bethlehem

Carl McCann

Seven hundred years before Christ, Micah plainly, powerfully, and prophetically announced Bethlehem as the place of Christ's birth. Actually, Micah's prophecy contains more than the place, for therein he describes the Divine nature of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Our approach in this article will be to examine the city of Bethlehem, exalt the deity of Christ, and exult in the providence of God, relative to the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

The City

When Micah announced Bethlehem as the place of Jesus' birth, he describes it as a little or insignificant city among the thousands of Judah. However, it was not without some notoriety. Bethlehem means "house of bread," and Ephratah means "fruitful." The city was located 5 miles south of Jerusalem in a fertile area which allowed for numerous crops to be grown (i.e. corn, figs, olive yards, and vineyards). Bethlehem was well known as the hometown of King David (1 Sam. 16:4; 1 Sam. 17:12-15); Boaz and Ruth settled in Bethlehem (Ruth 4:7-12); and Rachel, Jacob's

beloved wife, was buried there (Gen. 35:19; 48:7). Interestingly, King David longed for a drink out of the well at Bethlehem, prompting three of His mighty men to bust through the camp of the Philistines and return to David with the desired refreshment (2 Sam. 23:14-16). Moved by their loyalty, David refused to drink the water, but poured it out to the Lord. It is rather surprising that Bethlehem remained an insignificant city. It was positioned militarily (2 Sam. 23:14; 1 Chr. 11:6), agriculturally, and politically (being close to Jerusalem). All of these points line up for Bethlehem to be a great city – but it remained little or insignificant.

The Messiah

Within the announcement of Bethlehem as the appointed city, we find the prophetic announcement of Jesus' birth. Note of one Micah said "his goings forth are to be from old, from everlasting."Who is this one of whom Micah spoke? Without question Micah is setting forth the Deity of Jesus; no one else qualifies! Starting with the last chapter of the New Testament and moving toward the first, a few Scriptural references help us to understand the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy in the person of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 22:13 states, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." There never was a time when Jesus did not exist.

- 1 Peter 1:20 declares,

  > He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (cf. Eph. 1:4)

  God's plan of the ages included, yea, was dependent upon Christ.

- Colossians 1:16-17 reveals,

  > For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all, and in Him all things consist. (cf. John 1:1-3)

  The One born in Bethlehem was the Creator of all things, He is eternal and thus cannot be a part of His own work.

- John 17:5 affirms, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." (cf. v.24) Before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he possessed a relationship of love and shared glory with the Father. AS his work on earth is coming to an end, Jesus longs for that Divine, Eternal relationship to be restored.

Providential Activity

With Bethlehem as the birth place of Jesus, a problem still existed. Joseph and Mary did not live in Bethlehem. With Nazareth as their hometown how is the prophecy of Micah to be fulfilled? An unlikely answer is found in Augustus Caesar, who decreed every person must return to their hometown, where a census was taken and taxes paid. While obeying this order of Caesar, Mary's time was completed and Jesus was born (Luke 2:1-7). It all seems so simple, but Micah's prophecy 700 years before Jesus' birth was minutely fulfilled. While the skeptic balks and sneers, we who believe are strengthened by the powerful proof of predictive prophecy.

CW

Isaiah 53: The Suffering Savior

Clay Bond

In Acts chapter eight, we learn of the evangelist Philip's interaction with an Ethiopian man whose curiosity was sparked by Isaiah's writings about the silent sufferer in Isaiah 53. Beginning from this Scripture, Philip "preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35). We want to follow Philip's example and see what we can learn about Jesus in Isaiah 53.

First, Isaiah reveals that, from a purely human standpoint, the word that best describes the man of Isaiah 53 is "insignificant." Humanity was unimpressed as they beheld this "tender plant," "a root out of a dry ground," one who had "no form or comeliness," and "no beauty." He was born in an insignificant place, to an insignificant family, of an insignificant town (Lk. 2:7). There was no family nobility, social or economic status, or royal birth to cause men to take note of His presence. He was the son of a humble carpenter with no outward evidence of His true identity. The promised Messiah was viewed only as a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and He was summarily rejected by men (Jn. 1:11).

Second, Isaiah identifies the vicarious nature of this man's great suffering by using the word "our" multiple times. This man, who was judged to be insignificant and unimportant, bore "*our* griefs," carried "*our* sorrows," was wounded for "*our* iniquities," and chastised for "*our* peace." Surely we believed that one who was punished so greatly must have committed some horrible atrocity and must have deserved rejection and humiliation, but Isaiah demands that we acknowledge the vicarious nature of this man's silent suffering. He was guilty of nothing and could not be convicted of sin, yet He was pierced, chastened, scourged, and experienced the most violent execution known to man (Jn. 8:46).

Third, Isaiah depicts this sufferer as the atoning Lamb, brought to the slaughter, on whom the Lord has laid "the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6-7). Sin demands a price, and our just and righteous God cannot withhold the wages earned by every sinner (Rom. 6:23; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The unjust trial, the false imprisonment, and criminal's death suffered by this Lamb pleased the Father only because it enabled Him to accept His Son as offering for our sin (Isa. 53:10-12). Paul wrote, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). Jesus was willing to bear that curse and hang on that tree to satisfy the judgement and wrath of God for us (1 Jn. 2:1-2).

Mankind may be unimpressed by the Messiah and ready to dismiss this seemingly insignificant man, however, from the vantage point of the Father, this unimpressive, insignificant man of sorrow was well pleasing (Mt. 17:5; Lk. 2:52). A reading of Isaiah 53 leaves us humbled and ashamed to have rejected the one who left glory to "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). When we are faced with the horrible reality of our own sinfulness and the terrible penalty owed, Isaiah 53 presents us with the spotless Lamb of God who suffered and died in our place. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (Jn. 12:32).

From Isaiah 53, Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. This man heard of the suffering Savior, he heard of God's great plan to redeem sinners, he heard that he needed to be baptized, he heard that he needed to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he confessed that belief, was baptized into Christ, and went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39). If you believe all that Isaiah reveals about Jesus, be like the Ethiopian eunuch, accept the sacrifice of the suffering Savior by obeying His gospel and you will be set free (Jn. 8:36). We are familiar with the popular hymn *Lamb of God* written by Twila Paris. The refrain of this song impresses us as the heartfelt reaction of anyone who has truly understood Isaiah 53:

O Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God,
I love the holy Lamb of God.
O wash me in His precious blood,
My Jesus Christ the Lamb of God.

CW

Daniel 7:13-14: The Everlasting King

Kevin Rhodes

The prophecy of Daniel has received great attention from the moment it was penned. Its message of steadfastness while living in a hostile society became the prototype for an entire class of literature as later Jewish authors attempted to capture its style and employ its theme. Daniel opened chapter seven with a vision similar to Nebuchadnezzar's dream recorded in Daniel 2. However, the focus of this vision was a great throne scene, illustrating that God still reigns in heaven (Dan. 7:9-10) regardless of the power men aspire to upon the earth. Daniel then closed the vision with these words,

"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13–14).

Whereas Daniel previously identified the various kingdoms of men as beasts and horns on the beasts, here he intentionally deviated from that pattern to call attention ("behold") to "One like the Son of Man." He thus identified the figure as One greater in character than those other kings and One representative of what man can be, made in the image of God. While this description alone implied Jesus Christ, the following

phrase— "Coming with the clouds of heaven"— heightened the imagery. Throughout the Old Testament, clouds designated the LORD's guidance (Ex. 13:21), will (Ex. 19:9; 33:9), and judgment (Eze. 38:9), including Jesus' warning of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:30) and the promise of final judgment (Rev. 1:7). Thus, Daniel's identifying a Son of Man pointed to the divine authority Jesus received again following His resurrection (Mt. 28:18). According to Daniel, this One "came to the Ancient of Days And they brought Him near before Him." This is no small event to consider. Here Daniel prophesies that One representing all mankind and simultaneously possessing divine authority would enter the very presence of God in all His holiness. Therefore, Daniel anticipated by inspiration Peter's argument at Pentecost in which, according to Psalm 16, Jesus rose from the grave to enter the presence of the Father (Acts 2:25-28). However, to enter God's presence requires perfect holiness, thus further establishing both the Messiah's identity and mission: a perfect Man with divine authority entering heaven to become the judge of all mankind (Acts 17:30-31; Jn. 12:48). The Son of Man, based upon His entrance into heaven, would thus be granted authority over all, having received glory in His resurrection and a kingdom over which He would rule through His defeat of the adversary of God and man (Rev. 12:10; Heb. 2:14-15). This kingdom, the church (Matt. 16:18-19), would be comprised not of Jews only but of people of all nations (Acts 10:34-35). It would not exist as a political entity like those previous kingdoms but as a spiritual entity transcending political borders, the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 4:17; Jn. 18:36). Jesus, the Son of Man, will reign over this spiritual kingdom until He hands it over to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Thus, the church is the eternal kingdom prophesied in Daniel 2:44 which was established during the time of the fourth kingdom (Rome), and which will continue until it blends into eternity.

While all of this was not clear in the minds of first century Jewish leaders, the power of Daniel's prophecy and many of its implications would not have been lost on them when, in response to the question, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark 14:61b), Jesus replied by quoting the first portion of this very prophecy: "Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven'" (Mark 14:62). The high priest counted this as blasphemy, and this statement alone served as the basis for condemning Jesus to death (Mark 14:63-64). How interesting that in responding to a question of His Messiahship, Jesus answered with a passage that implied far more: (1) the humanity of Christ, (2) the deity of Christ, (3) the resurrection of Christ, (4) the authority of Christ, and (5) the kingdom of Christ. How sad that the very people who should have known Daniel 7 the best rejected the One it promised. How sad it is today that due to their preconceived ideas about Jesus' mission, some people fail to see the beauty of how Christ fulfilled every point. When our Savior appeared before the high priest and quoted this passage, He was not lamenting His failure to accomplish the promise of this prophecy; He was anticipating its complete fulfillment following His crucifixion and resurrection!

CW

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continued from page 1

> that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. (1 Pet. 1:10-12)

There are certainly some observations in this passage that are worthy of our time. First, we see the diligence possessed by the prophets as they longed to know more and more about He of Whom they wrote. Second, we must note that the things they wrote were even of interest to the angels in heaven. Third, and this may be the most outstanding point of all from our perspective, they did not write these things for themselves, but rather they wrote these things for you and me. This is a tremendous blessing that we to often take for granted. For many, the Old Testament is off limits as far as their time, interest, and study is concerned. That is a shame because it is a thrill to be able to go back and study the faith building passages of old that explode in clarity and brightness in the pages of the New Testament.

For these and other reasons we encourage you to consider this volume of the Christian Worker and others to come that will shine the light of the New Testament on the shadows of the Old Testament. It should prove to be a thrilling study indeed. May we exalt our Lord daily as we study our Bibles more and more.

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