

# “PROPHET”

## HEBREWS 1

DECEMBER 12, 2010, SUNDAY, 11:00 AM – DR. JACK GRAHAM

Ah... ah... After that you might as well quit, you know! [laughter] But I'm not going to quit. I've got a message today.

And you know Kaitlin is the daughter of a pastor friend of mine, ah... Richard Powell down in MacGregor Baptist Church in Fort Myers, Florida. Great church! And ah... we're so happy to have Jordan and Kaitlin... Kaitlin with us here at Prestonwood.

Take your Bibles and turn with me, please, to Hebrews ah... chapter one... Hebrews, chapter one. And over the next several weeks I want to speak to you about a Savior for all seasons.

Now I believe in the promise of Christmas. I, as a matter of fact, love Christmas! I... I like most everything about Christmas! And that goes all the way back to my childhood. I have the greatest memories of those early days and, of course, the reindeer and Rudolph and the elves; the big man... the fat man himself, Santa Claus. You know I've mentioned before there are three stages and ages in our lives as men. One is when you believe in Santa Claus, two is when you become Santa Claus, and three... when you look like Santa Claus! [pastor chuckles] [laughter] Some of us are getting there!

But what is it that we really love about this season? Ah... once you get by the trappings and the excesses that we know that are out there regarding Christmas... once you get by all of that, I believe what we love about this time of the year is the expectation, the excitement, the build up; you know, just the thrill of getting ready for Christmas-- decorating the tree, putting some lights on the house, and of course, the great music of Christmas, the great sacred songs of Christmas and a lot of the fun songs that we sing at this time of the year. How can you help but love the smiles on kid's faces as they're opening their presents? And, of course, there's the amazing food that we eat at the Christmas season. And no doubt we... we have great anticipation because of ah... our faith and most of us would say our friends and family. Then there's the presents! You can't open... wait to open the presents or to give the presents!

And then December 25<sup>th</sup> comes and Christmas happens and you turn off the lights on that evening and then comes the big let down. What happened? Because you realize these ah... high expectations that you have... Clark Griswold... about Christ... Christmas! These high expectations that you have! You can't ever really experience those! Reality sets in, you've maxed out your credit card. Now your clothes don't fit because you've eaten so much. Ah... you found out... you remembered why, you just really don't like some of the people in your family! [laughter] but you love them anyway. Maybe you didn't get what you wanted under the tree. Or you realized for certain that you have been re-gifted on

numerous occasions at Christmas. [laughter] So you go back to... to work just worn out and exhausted! And that's a bummer!

But wouldn't it be great if we could live with the excitement, the expectation, the joy, the blessedness, that sense of joy and wonder and anticipation... ah... I mean really know this all year long? It's what I want to talk to you about... a Savior for all seasons, the One who is the presents and the promise of Christmas. It is a promise of a life at it's best... a life full of abundance, and life that is yet to come. Christmas without Christ is a beating! But if you celebrate the life of Jesus... if you enjoy the presence of Jesus in your life... if you worship Him, you will experience a merry and blessed season because of the Savior all year through. And this is what happens when we discover the real meaning of Christmas.

And so over the next three weeks I'm going to be talking about three anointed titles... appointed titles that have been given to Jesus. They surround three specific appearances of Jesus; as Prophet, as Priest and as King... Prophet and Priest and King! Jesus is the Prophet... that is the Mes... Messiah who came to deliver us, which means He is God revealing. Jesus is the Priest... the anointed Priest of God, sympathizing with us, saving us, which means He is God redeeming. And Jesus is the King which means God is reigning! God is ruling, God is reigning in the hearts of those who welcome Him!

So the Prophet is God with us... Emmanuel! God sent His Son in the fulfillment of all the prophecies. The Priest is God for us... saving us and now praying for us at the right hand of the Father; ever living to make intercession for the saints. He is for us. And the King is God in us, reigning in us, ruling over us.

Emmanuel... God with us... that's our subject today. When Jesus was born, the world... the whole world was waiting for the first Christmas. Especially the Jewish people. And at the time of the birthday of Christ ah... expectation was at an all time high. All you need to do is read the story surrounding the birth of Christ. For example, Simeon... God had revealed to him as an older adult that he would not see death until he embraced the... the Messiah. And God fulfilled that promise. Anna, the prophetess, and Elizabeth and Zachariah and others surrounding the entire scene. Of course, Mary herself expecting the Christ-child... expectation was at an all time high because the Prophet... the Messiah... praying for Him, waiting for Him!

It was a dark, dark time in Israel. They had not had a word... specific word from God for over 400 years! It seemed that the heavens were silent, that God was no longer speaking and they... because they were living under the iron boot of Rome they wondered if God loved them, if God cared about them. And so they were praying for this promised One, and God sent Jesus.

The prophet, of course,... the role of the prophet... all three of these roles... Prophet, Priest and King... are the three anointed and appointed offices of the Old Testament. And the anointed prophet was the one likened to Moses. Peter referred to this in speaking of Moses who was the first prophet of Israel that there would be one like unto Moses to fulfill the Law and to fulfill all of the other prophets that would come, from Samuel and Isaiah and all the rest, that there would be One who was the Prophet, the Messiah! The last One who would come to fulfill it all, to make it all happen.

Now the Prophet speaks for God, but Jesus is the God who speaks! John describes Him as the Word of God. The prologue of the Gospel of John begins in verse one: *"In the beginning was the Word... the Logos... the Word of God..."* *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the same was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by Him and without Him there was not anything made that was made."* This is all referencing Jesus as Creator-God and Savior-God.

So throughout the pages of the Old Testament God left fingerprints in prophecies... the DNA, if you will, of the One who was to come; prophecies that would help us identify the Messiah. There were many would-be and wannabe Messiahs; still are today. But the Bible would tell us not only how He would come, but where He would come, and why He would come!

And so you have prophecies laced throughout the Scripture regarding the ancestry of Jesus, regarding the birth of Jesus, ah... regarding His life and ministry and prophetic ah... function of the Messiah. And then, of course, great prophecies regarding His passion and His death and His resurrection, and the promise of His return. And so prophecy becomes one of the most compelling and convincing proofs in identifying Jesus as the Messiah. If you were to ask the question: "Will the real Messiah please stand up?", Jesus could stand up; the only one who will stand up because all of prophecy points to Him.

There are over 100 specific detail prophecies regarding the Messiah that are identified in the person of Christ. I mention just a few today. One is the Messiah would be a descendent of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We read this in Genesis chapter 12. And, indeed, Jesus was a Jew by birth who carried the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I often say to my Jewish friends that we're not asking you as a Jew to convert to the Christian religion. I say, as a matter of fact we who are followers of Jesus have converted to the faith of our fathers. We have converted to the Jewish faith... in the sense that we have received *Yeshua*... Messiah. So we are not asking you to convert to us, but to receive your own Messiah whose name is Jesus.

So He is of the lineage of David... ah... of the lineage of Abraham, and yes, even the lineage of David as well. But also the Bible tells us that this One who would come, who would be the Deliverer and the Conqueror would be born as the seed of the woman. Now every seventh grade biology student understands that a man possesses the seed, but in this case it is the seed of a woman, signifying and signaling a virgin, supernatural birth. So later on... Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14... the Scripture says, *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Emmanuel."*

It matters greatly that Jesus be born of a virgin. Why? Were He born in natural means by the birth of every one of us, he would have inherited our sinful curse of sin; He could not have been our Savior. It matters... The difference between heaven and hell, life and death, that Jesus, the pure and perfect Lamb of God, be born of a virgin as God prophesied. Great is the mystery of godliness. It's not something we understand, but believe me, if God can raise Jesus from the dead, He can create life in the womb of Mary. So He's virgin born, prophesied even as He was born by Mary.

Then we're told, of course in this most famous scripture regarding His birth that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem... Micah 5:2: *"But you, O Bethlehem, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,*

*from you shall come forth from... fo... fo... for Me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old and ancient days."* One problem: Mary and her espoused husband Joseph lived in Nazareth, but God so orchestrated and ordained the events of the birth of the Messiah that He put it in the mind of a secular king... a pagan king to bring all the Israelites [pastor gets frog and clears his throat] at this time to Bethlehem and at that moment and that time in fullness of time as God converged history, Jesus was born in Bethlehem... grew up in Nazareth, after a period of living in Egypt (which the Bible also prophesied.)

And, of course, one of the most well-known Scriptures regarding the birth of the King, the birth of the Prophet is Isaiah 9[6-7]: *"For unto us a child is born, to us a Son is given..."* In one sense not only is the birth of Jesus an arrival, but it is a departure. An arrival in the sense that He is born on earth; a departure in the sense that God sent His Son from heaven and He departed glory because of grace and came to us. *"...and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. And of the increase of His government and of His peace there will be no end, on the throne of David, (again of the lineage of David) and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of host will do this."*

These prophecies all written at least 250 years before the time of Christ and His birth. So when you read Hebrews 1: 1-2 and find these words, you know why: *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through all... through whom also He created the world."* Jesus would say [Matthew 5:17], *"Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but rather to fulfill them!"* He is God's fulfilling Word... God's final Word... God's forever Word! God speaks and Jesus is the Word; for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

So when Jesus, the Baby, grew up and became a young man at approximately the age of thirty, after a season of being tempted in the wilderness by Satan and defeating the enemy there, in Luke chapter 4, verses 18 and 19, Jesus entered the city of Nazareth, his boyhood home, in the synagogue there and He was given the Scriptures to read and He opened up this passage from Isaiah, and as recorded in Luke verses 18 and 19... Luke 4, verses 18 and 19, these are the very words that Jesus read: *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed (there's that word) anointed [Me] to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

In other words, Jesus is announcing His appointed office as the Messiah. Jesus was never, ever in doubt as to His own identity! He knew who He was! He knew why He came! And in verse 21... 21 of Luke chapter 4, Jesus said: *"And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."* And that's what drove some of the unbelievers wild in that day... that He claimed to be the Messiah, that He was taking this heavenly office of the prophet of God that would be sent. He began to minister and to preach and correcting and righting wrongs, and... and giving justice where there was injustice. He was healing the hurting. He was delivering from the powers of Satan and of evil. Matthew 4:23 *"And He went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom."* God had one Son and He made Him a preacher of the Gospel! The Prophet of God preaching of the kingdom and of the healing of every disease and every affliction among the people.

I'm saying, we could talk about Isaiah 53 and the passion of our Lord and those... that... that DNA print that describes His death and how He died, and details of His life that would amaze all of us. It... The preponderance of evidence is clear. The most compelling and clear evidence that Jesus is who He claimed to be, the Messiah of God... the Prophet of God... is given to us in the Prophets. The prophecy ... prophecy is the golden key that unlocks the heart and mind of God. These are no accidents; these are no contrived ah... prophetic words.

But if you're a skeptic and if you wonder if Christ is who He claimed to be... If this message of Jesus is real, do yourself a favor: study God's Word, specifically related to the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus Christ. If you're openhearted and open-minded the Spirit of God will open your life to His truth. I assure you of this. If you are sincere in wanting to know God... connecting with God, God will move heaven and earth to get the message solid in your heart and in your life. So open God's Word and meet the Prophet who steps from the pages of Scriptures and into His... into our heart.

One day after the resurrection Jesus was walking with a couple of disciples along the road to Emmaus, and they were discouraged and despondent about the things that had happened in Jerusalem... the death of the Savior. And they thought He was the Messiah because, you see, the Jews primarily were expecting a warrior... warrior-deliverer Messiah and Prophet; One who would overturn the injustice of Rome and the bondage in which they were living. So these men were discouraged. And He spoke to them regarding the Laws and the Prophets.

And the Bible says in Luke 24 that *"Jesus showed those men in all the Scriptures..."* that would have been the Old Testament scriptures, of course... *"in all the Scriptures those things concerning Himself."* He pointed out all these fulfilled prophecies and all of the shadows and types and illustrations and examples of the Gospel that we see in Him. God is now with us! He is Emmanuel, which means God is with us. God is... Notice that is present-tense. God is with us! He is present. My friend Max Lucado says, "Because He is present, you don't have to be tense." He is always present in our lives.

John 14 is an amazing passage of Scripture... verse 23. Jesus said, *"If anyone loves Me he will keep My word and My Father will love Him and We will come to him and make our home with Him."* Here is how you experience God. Here is how you know a Savior for all seasons of life, and that is He makes His home with us. This means, because Christ now is in us, Emmanuel present with us... this means that we are never alone. It means that God has fulfilled all of His promises to us. And the ones yet to be fulfilled when He returns and takes us home to Him are as sure as God Himself. He is with us. You're never alone. He said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." He said, "I am with you always even to the end of the world."

I love the passage in Isaiah which says, verse 2 of chapter 43: *"When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; and when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you."* Notice it says, not if you pass through waters, or rushing rivers, but when! Life is a series of good times and bad times, hills and valleys, ups and downs, hard times and great times, times when we're in the deep water and we wonder if we're going under, times when we're in the fire; we wonder if we're going to be consumed! But even there God says, "In the struggles of life... in pain and perplexities I am there! Do not doubt that!" He's with us in life's battles! He is walking with us through the fiery moments! He is carrying our burden! No matter what God is with me.

Maybe your marriage fell apart last year and you feel so all alone. But God is with you and helping you put the pieces of your life back together again. Maybe a child is struggling and it's breaking your heart. God is with you and will give you wisdom along the way. Maybe a loved one that was with you last Christmas is gone, but God is with you in that time of grieving and broken heartedness. Maybe you're sad and empty and depressed, and you wonder why when all seem to be having such a great time at this season of the year and there's singing and there's laughter and there's parties... why you feel so sad and broken and empty and discouraged. And maybe you're walking through even times of despair in your life, but God [tap] is [tap] with you even in the darkest moment! He is your Savior forever and ever! Don't miss the Messiah because He will never leave or forsake you! His promises are true and faithful! It's... it's absolutely true! Jesus never fails! I'm here to testify Jesus [clap] never fails! Never! [applause] Never!

And so... so when God promises you in Jeremiah 30... ah... Jeremiah's prophecy when God promises [Jeremiah 31:3] *"I have loved you with an everlasting love"* that means that God will love you forever! That there's nothing you can do to keep God from loving you as much as He loves you right now, nothing that you can do that can keep God from loving you as much as you [?] do right now. There's nothing you can do to make God love you more than He loves you right now because He loves you perfectly; He loves you forever! *"I've loved you with an everlasting love!"* [Romans 8:39] *"Nothing will separate us from the love of God."* God has promised He will never [tap] stop [tap] loving [tap] you [tap]! Believe it! Believe it!

And when God promises and we know that *"All things are working together for the good to them who love the Lord, to those who are called according to His purpose"*... a promise to every believer! When God says, *"I am orchestrating and ordaining the circumstances and the conditions of your life, that even when the worst happens, I'm turning that around for good in your life, I will bless you and strengthen you, and I will override and overrule in all the circumstances of my children's lives! that means you can count on it! You can believe it! Because even though there are times of waiting patiently on God and enduring suffering, God in His own time and His own way, just as at the birth of Jesus when He sent His Son, God will deliver!*

When God promises, [1 John 1:9] *"If you confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness."* And you feel that guilt and that pain because of mistakes and failures and sinful actions of the past... when you feel all of that, you're reminded of the promise of God that God will not hold you accountable for He has already forgiven you; because of what Christ has done every sin... past, present and future... is underneath His blood, and, therefore, confess your sins and know that you are cleansed by the power of God! God [strike] is faithful! He is with you and will never leave you! Believe it!

And when God promises eternal life, He will do what He says. Jesus said [John 14:2-3], *"I go to prepare a place for you and if I go, I will come again and receive you unto Myself that where I am there you will be also."* Do you believe that? That God is faithful enough to bring you even through the throes and the terrors of death into His presents. Do you believe that God will keep His promise concerning you?

Jesus said in John 28 [John 10:28]... try this for a promise... *"I give them eternal life and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand!"* [You] Say, *"Well what about the devil? Can he snatch them*

out?" Don't you know if he would he... if he could he would? [1 John 4:4] *"That greater is He that is in you than is in the world."* You're safe and secure in Christ. Wait on the promise of God. The birth of... the birth of the Babe in Bethlehem is... is man's hope. Jesus is the fulfillment of all our hopes and dreams. I love the line in Silent Night [O Little Town of Bethlehem] *"the hopes and fears of all the years are lost in Thee tonight."*

God by His Spirit, God the Prophet, Jesus speaks to our hearts His truth through His word, by His Spirit. He changes our lives as we become more like Him. Correcting us. Sometimes the role of a prophet is to correct and chastise, but then to set us right. He heals the hurting and the broken-hearted. He gives us what we need.

Now you may be going through one of those rough spots in life right now and it's dark as it was the day that Jesus was born and you feel like there's a bondage surrounding you and you just wonder when is God ever going to come through. Just like the Israelites were wondering. *"When is God ever going to make good on His promise to us?"* Perhaps you feel like that today.

I tell you a story about Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ... Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. You know he's one of the great poets of all time. And one of the most familiar carols that we hear around Christmas time... the words were written by Longfellow. And the story behind Longfellow's writing of this great hymn are extremely inspirational.

In the year 1860 Henry was riding high. His career was successful. Everything was going his way. Abraham Lincoln was just elected president of the United States and there was a great deal of optimism about the future of the country. And Longworth... ah... Longfellow, rather... He was... he was so excited about his future.

But then turned... things turned very dark for America. Civil war broke out, fathers fighting against sons, brothers against brothers. And this impacted Longfellow personally. Ah... when the civil war began in earnest, Longfellow's wife died in a tragic accident in their home... a fire. And Henry himself received such severe burns in this fire that he could not even attend his wife's funeral. And in his... in his diary that year on Christmas day 1861 he wrote these words: *"How inexpressively sad are the holidays."*

In 1862 the toll of the war began to mount and in that year, writing in his diary at Christmas, he said this: *"A Merry Christmas say the children, but that is no more for me."*

In 1863 his young son ran away to join the Union army and was severely injured in battle and returned home in December, around Christmas time. That year there was no entry in Longfellow's diary.

Longfellow was in such deep despair and depression that he could barely get out of the house. Everything had come to a grinding halt in his life. But he wanted to pull out of the despair; he wanted to capture the joy that he once knew. And so he stepped out of his house on Christmas day and he heard Christmas bells ringing. And he was so inspired to hear the bells and the carols playing that he set down and wrote the first verse:

“I heard the bells on Christmas Day / Their old familiar carols play, And wild and sweet the words repeat / of peace on earth, goodwill to men!”

And then when he came to write the third verse he was taken back with the whole idea that the condition of his beloved country, the country was torn apart, the battle of Gettysburg had taken place, everything looked dark. And he probably asked himself what a lot of people are asking themselves today, with all of the terror and the fears and the darkness of our world. “How can I write about peace on earth and goodwill to men” with a country torn by war, when there’s so much strife and there’s so much hatred? But he kept writing:

“And in despair I bowed my head; / ‘There is no peace on earth,’ I said; / ‘For hate is strong, and mocks the song / of peace on earth, goodwill to men!’”

But then, catching a breath of the Spirit, he wrote the next verse:

“Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: (I love this!) / ‘God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!’ / The Wrong shall fail, the Right prevail, /Of peace on earth [tap], goodwill to men!”

Would you bow your heads with me in prayer? Every head bowed and every eye closed.

Perhaps you’re coming through a down time in your life, a struggle in your life and you need to know that God is with you, that His peace is present, that you know the sense of His love and His grace. Pray and meditate right now. [music begins and vocal is sung of “I heard the Bells on Christmas Day.”] [At close of singing the music continues in the background]

With heads still bowed and eyes closed, the Prophet Jesus is speaking to you today. This is the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus, the One who came to fulfill all your hopes and dreams, to make things right, to change everything in your heart and your life, to give you the peace that He promised. We know there will not ultimately be peace on earth until the Prince of Peace reigns, the King comes again. But until that day you can know peace in your life... in your home and your family, among your friend and in your neighborhood if you will be a witness of the Word of God, of the testimony of Jesus. We are His body now. We are His hands, His feet. We have the Word of God and we’re to minister to people and share His love and His grace everyday. This is how He is a Savior for every season.

Do you know Him? The Bible says that [John 1:11-12] “*He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him and believed Him, to them gave He the right to be called the children of God.*”

Receive Jesus into your life right now by praying a simple prayer of faith. Invite Christ in your life and in just a moment come forward. We’ll help you with that commitment to Christ. Upstairs and downstairs our ministers are waiting for you. This is moment that Christ steps into your life. This is the moment that you’ve been waiting for. This is the moment you were born to experience. Come to Jesus today.



If you're already a believer and you want to join Prestonwood, come forward and join the church today. Just make it as simple as that: I want to join in the mission of this church and the message of Christ to the world and to our neighbors.

If you want to rededicate your life, we'll pray with you about that. Maybe you're going through a tough time; we'll pray with you through that. If you just want to come and pray, we're available to do that.

*Lord, take now this time of decision and commitment and bring unto Yourself all who are responding and believing in their hearts to the One who has spoken so clearly today. In Jesus' name. AMEN*