

## **Some Prophecies of the Minor Prophets Pertaining to the Advent of the Messiah**

### **Zechariah.3:1-10: The Joshua Prophecy**

Historical context: After the time of the Babylonian captivity, during the restoration of Jerusalem and its Temple and its priesthood under Zerubbabel, royal governor of Jerusalem, and Joshua, high priest. Cf. Ezra 3. The historical events of the time foreshadow the coming of Jesus, our great high priest, His removal of our captivity to sin, and His eternal mediation on our behalf before God the Father.

***[1] Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.***

The high priest bears the name Joshua or *Jesus*, as the Septuagint translates it, as our Lord is called in the koine Greek of the Gospels. The name means, "YHWH is Salvation." Cp. "You shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). This prophecy will conclude with the removing of the guilt of the land in a single day.

***[2] And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"***

The Lord puts an end to Joshua's trial by Satan, in Joshua's favor. He banishes Satan and announces that He is pleased with Jerusalem once again.

***[3] Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments.***

***[4] And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with rich apparel."***

As v. 4 makes plain, the filthy garments are symbolic of Joshua bearing the sins of the people for whom he acts as priest. By virtue of being found righteous before God in the midst of his trial by Satan, he merits the removal of the sinfulness of his people.

***[7] "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here.***

Cp. Paul's description of Jesus our Great High Priest in Hebrews 9-10, especially:

*Heb 9:24-26: [24] For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. [25] Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; [26] for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

***[8] Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men of good omen: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.***

The prophecy itself springs from the near event (the restoration of the Jewish priesthood) to the further event like unto it: the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah is called "the Branch" because he is a branch from the royal family tree of Jesse, the father of King David, whose line, by divine covenant (Gen 49:10, 2 Sam 7:12-16) will always possess the Kingship in Israel.

Some examples of the Messiah as “The Branch” in the Old Testament:  
Isaiah 4:2-6; Isaiah 11:1-16; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Jeremiah 33:14-16.

***[9] .. and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day. [10] In that day, says the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree."***

The last verse is the key to the enigmatic response of Nathanael when Jesus tells him that he saw him “under the fig tree” and Nathanael responds, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:48-49).

### **Zechariah 9-13 as related to the events of the Passion of our Lord:**

***Zechariah 9:9: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass.***

Fulfilled in Our Lord’s Triumphant Entrance. He comes to Jerusalem in the pose of an ancient Davidic king (cf. 1 Kings 1, coronation of Solomon). He comes not in royal power, but humbly, because “he shall command peace to the nations” (Zech 9:10); he will be “Prince of Peace” (Is 9:6). He will command all nations (v. 10; Gen 49:10). He will release prisoners from their captivity (“the waterless pit” Zech 9:11). The “liberation from captivity” language is also favorite of Isaiah (cp. Is 61:1) and frequently used in the Gospel by Jesus to describe his mission of liberating his people from sin, death and the devil (e.g., Luke 4:18).

**Zech 11:** The Good Shepherd contends with the wicked shepherds of the people/flock. He is sold for “thirty pieces of silver” (Zech 11:12), which is cast into the Temple. It is an insulting, cheap price for a man, the ransom price of a gored slave (Ex. 21:32). This sets us up for how the Good Shepherd will be betrayed: by being pierced in the side.

***Zech 12:10-11: And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.***

“Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo” refers to the untimely death of righteous King Josiah, cut down in his thirties, in the midst of reforming Israel. 2 Kings 23:23-30.

***Zechariah 13:1: On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.***

Refers to the springing forth of the waters of Baptism on that first Christian Pentecost, when the Jews in Jerusalem repent of the death of Jesus, and 3000 are baptized (Acts 2:37-41).

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Part II**

*Hosea 11:1: When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.*

*Matthew: 2:15: and [Jesus] remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."*

How can Matthew apply this text of Hosea to the infancy of Jesus? Is he merely playing with words? There is a deeper connection, but it requires awareness of a few broad, but important themes of the Old Testament.

*FIRST:* in Hosea: The entire book turns on a poetical metaphor: the covenant between YHWH and Israel is like a marriage between a Bridegroom and a Bride—and Israel has been unfaithful!

The stages of a love story are mapped onto covenant history:

- betrothal (at Sinai, where God made the covenant with Israel),
- setting up a home together (settlement in the Promised Land),
- infidelity (Israel worships the false gods of the Canaanites / Hos 2:4-7),
- divorce (the covenant is broken / Hos 2:2), and
- the wife is sent away (the Northern Kingdom is taken into exile by the Assyrians / Hos 2:8-13).

But this is not the final story: Just as He did when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, so too God will again “speak tenderly” to His people (Hos 2:14-15), allure them in their captivity, free them from their pagan oppressors, and thereby conduct “a second Exodus” (Hos 2:15). This reunion between God and His People will be like of old: Just as David reigned over all twelve tribes and some Gentiles (Hos 1:11; 3:5), so too, will the Messiah reign over all twelve tribes that were lost, and all the Gentiles (Gen 49:10). This new covenant will be eternal, never to be taken away: Hos 2:16-19.

The “Second Exodus” theme is quite common among the prophets. It underlies today’s Gospel: John the Baptist calling himself “the voice of one crying out in the desert” (cp. Is 40:1-5/Book of Consolation).

*SECOND:* a broader old Testament theme: the forefather foreshadows in some way the people sprung from him. For example, Jacob (renamed Israel) as a personification of his descendents, the nation of Israel. Or Abraham, who “pre-capitulates” / gives a “prequel” of the Israelites’ history from Moses to David:

**Abraham’s Travelogue in Gen 12-14:**

- he descends into Egypt because of famine (12:10)
- threat of assimilation (intermarriage with pagans): Pharaoh nearly takes his wife! (12:14-15)
- God’s miraculous intervention by means of plagues (12:17)
- Abraham despoils the Egyptians (12:19)
- Abraham return to the promised land (13:1)
- fights a war with the Canaanites (14:14-15)
- wins the victory (14:16-17)
- and receives divine blessing from the priest-king of Jerusalem! (14:18-20)

With this in mind, we can see: Matthew is depicting Jesus, like Abraham, as the beginning of a New People (the Church) still contained in One Person (Jesus Himself). This New People is the New Israel, the re-gathered *Kingdom of God*, headed by a Davidic king, who rules over all Jews and Gentiles forever.

**Micah 5:1-5: The Messiah's Birthplace**, cited as fulfilled by Jesus in Matthew 2:1-6:

*Matthew 2:[1] Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, [2] "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." [3] When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; [4] and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. [5] They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: [6] `And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'"*

***Micah 5:1-5: [1] Now you are walled about with a wall; siege is laid against us; with a rod they strike upon the cheek the ruler of Israel.***

As with Zechariah's Joshua Prophecy (Zech 3), a momentous event in Jewish history becomes the springboard for a prophecy about an even more momentous event much later in time. Micah proceeds from the image of besieged Jerusalem, to an image of the Messiah gloriously reigning over his enemies.

***[2] But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.***

Because of Jacob/Israel's promise to Judah (Gen 49:10) and God's covenant with David (2 Sam 7:12-16), the royal line would never depart from Judah. So the Messiah is clearly the reference in what follows. His origin is from "of old, from everlasting days" (*a diebus aeternitatis*). The first phrase "of old" can easily denote the antiquity of the line of David, but "of old" can also mean of early biblical history, or even God in his eternal pre-existence of all human history: E.g. Deut. 33:27: "The eternal God is thy refuge" or Ps 55:19: God who abideth "of old." The sense permits, but does not require, a notion of tremendous antiquity. But when reinforced with "from everlasting days," the sense seems emphatic. Christian understanding of this prophecy has taken it to refer to Jesus' divine origin (Luke 1:35).

***[3a] Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in travail has brought forth;*** Oppressed Israel shall be without its King until "she who is in travail has brought forth." We know that Micah knew Isaiah's prophecies, for he copies some of them (Micah 4:3/Is 2:4). Does he have Isaiah 7:14 in mind here? The prophecy of the virgin birth?

***[3b] then the rest of his brethren shall return to the people of Israel.***

A common theme of the Messianic kingdom: the reuniting of all the people of God into one kingdom.

***[4] And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.***

This kingdom will stretch "to the ends of the earth." Cp. the Great Commission:

*Matthew 28:19-20: [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."*