

## ***The Prophesied Messianic Line***

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### **Introduction**

Galatians 4:4 says that Christ was born at the right moment in history, *the fullness of time*.

*When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under law*  
[All Scripture translations are my own].

### **Some OT Prophecies of Christ**

#### **Genesis 3:15**

*Now I will put enmity  
Between you [the serpent] and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall strike your head,  
And you shall strike His heel.*

This initial prophecy is a broad statement, so Eve surmised that she was the prophesied woman. The boy's name makes a play on the word rendered: *I have acquired*. Eve thought that her son was *the seed of woman, the LORD*. Sadly for her, Cain did not fulfill that prophecy, but giving this name to him testifies that she, in fact, believed God's Genesis 3:15 promise. A corrected translation of Gen 4:1 follows.

*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man, the LORD."*

The point where translators struggle in Gen 4:1 is with the last three words. Note that the second word is untranslated (so there is a box in the place of its translation).

<sup>ʔiṣ</sup>	<sup>ʔeṭ</sup> -yhwh
a man	<input type="checkbox"/> -Yhwh [Jehovah = the LORD]

Translators struggle with <sup>ʔeṭ</sup>. They translate it as if it were a preposition, which would mean *with*, as *with [the help of] the LORD*. However, that is not the type of *with* that is conveyed by this preposition. It would mean *with*, as in *next to*. Surely, Eve did not mean *I have acquired a man next to the LORD*.

There is another word <sup>ʔeṭ</sup>. It says that the word that follows is (1) definite (whether or not it has "the" attached to it) and (2) serves as an object of the verb (or is in apposition to the object). In other words, Eve thought her newborn son was the LORD, the Seed of Woman, who would crush the serpent. I have acquired a man, the LORD.

## Genesis 22:18 and 21:12

These verses clarify that the lineage would be through Abraham. More specifically, the lineage would come through Isaac, a son of Abraham.

*In your seed all nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you obeyed My voice<sup>1</sup> [Gen 22:18].  
In Isaac your seed shall be called [Genesis 21:12b].*

This calling of seed became an issue when Isaac became a father of twins. Which son would carry the Genesis 22:18 lineage? Clues appear in Genesis 25:22f, while Rebekah was still pregnant:

*Then the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why am I this way?" So she went to seek the LORD.*

*Then the LORD said to her:*

*"Two **nations** are in your womb,*

*Two **peoples** shall be separated from your body;*

*One **people** shall be stronger than the other [**people**],*

*The [**people of the**] older shall serve the [**people of the**] younger."*

An important issue is often overlooked in these verses, which appears here in bold print. God's words to Rebekah focused not on the two boys, but upon the nations they would father. Is this unexpected? No. In renaming Abram as Abraham, God declared him father of a multitude of nations:

*I [say], "Behold, My covenant is with you, and you have become a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you father of a multitude of nations. I will make you abundantly fruitful; and I have made nations of you, and kings shall come from you" [Gen 17:4-6].*

Abraham's status as father of a multitude of nations (each headed by a king) would be true not only through the lineages of Ishmael (Gen 25:13-16) and of the sons of Keturah (Gen 25:1-4), but through the lineage of Esau (Gen 36). Israel is not the only nation that comes from Abraham.

Within the context of Genesis (as well as in Romans 9) what is the focus of God choosing Jacob, not Esau? The answer to that question appears earlier in Genesis. God had promised only one Seed of Woman (Gen 3:15); He had only promised one lineage, the line of Isaac—through which all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 21:12). So, with the birth of Isaac's twins, only one nation would be chosen to carry the Messianic line—Israel.

[Excursus 1: many imagine that passages speaking of God choosing Jacob, not Esau, refer to the eternal destinies of two men (e.g., heaven or hell), that is not the point at all. No OT passage (correctly understood) portrays Esau as an unbeliever. Furthermore, Hebrews 12:15f warns believers against throwing away their reward, as Esau did. The author of Hebrews regarded Esau as a believer, albeit an unrewardable one].

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<sup>1</sup> Some claim that 22:18b treats the Abrahamic Covenant as conditional. Not so. God promises even more than in Genesis 12:3, because Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac. By analogy, a father promised his son, "Next week, I will give you twenty-dollars as a gift." A week later, he says, "Because you especially pleased me yesterday, here is fifty dollars, not twenty." A conditioned bonus does not negate the unconditionality of the original promise. Though the basic Abrahamic Covenant remains unconditional, God is free to add *supplemental* incentives for faithfulness.

[Excursus 2: Consider Malachi 1:1-5, which contains the assertion: *Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated*. People imagine that this speaks of the two boys, when (in fact) it speaks of their nations: Israel versus Edom. Note also that Malachi was written about 900 years after Genesis.

<sup>1</sup>The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by the hand of Malachi. <sup>2</sup>"I have loved you<sup>pl</sup>," says the LORD. "Yet you<sup>pl</sup> say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; <sup>3</sup> But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his inheritance For the jackals of the wilderness." <sup>4</sup> Even though Edom has said, "We have been impoverished, But we will return and build the ruins," Thus says the LORD of armies: "They may build, but I will throw down; They shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, And people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever. <sup>5</sup> Your eyes shall see, And you shall say, 'The LORD is magnified beyond the territory of Israel.'"

#### Genesis 28:4

With the choice of Jacob's line as the Messianic one, Israel became the national entity through which the Messiah would be born. In that regard, Isaac pronounces Jacob and his seed (not Esau) as heirs to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 28:4):

*And [may El Shaddai<sup>2</sup>] give you<sup>sg</sup> the blessing of Abraham, To you<sup>sg</sup> and your<sup>sg</sup> seed with you<sup>sg</sup>, That you<sup>sg</sup> may inherit the land of your sojournings, Which God gave to Abraham.*

No longer was the promised deliverer just Seed of Woman, nor just Abraham's seed (called through Isaac). Now He was to be Abraham's seed (called through both Isaac and Jacob).

#### Genesis 49:10

An interesting change occurs when Jacob started having children: all of them together constituted one nation: Israel. This contrasts with the offspring of Abraham and Isaac, whose children represented various nations. However, this did not mean that each of the twelve sons would have his own Messianic line. In Genesis 48–49, Jacob blessed each of the tribes. His three eldest sons (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) had each forfeited firstborn rights (cf. Gen 49:3-7), so Judah receives it (Gen 49:8-12).

Verse 10 is strategic, because it narrows the promised lineage to one tribe: Judah.

*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor one who decrees from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And He will have the obedience of the peoples.*

The oracle promises a ruling dynasty, culminated by One who can be described by *Shiloh*. How does the verse speak of a dynastic lineage? The second stanza describes procreative activity in polite terms. Generation after generation of those who issue decrees (e.g., kings) will hold the ruling scepter until Shiloh comes. So, who is Shiloh?

Shiloh is a compounded form. The first part (*še*) derives from a shortened form of the relative pronoun ("who," "which," "whose," etc.). The second part is *lô* (meaning "to him"). A smoothed-out translation of the verbless clause would be: "whose it [is]."<sup>3</sup> Every king who preceded Christ on David's throne merely held the scepter, but the one to whom it belongs (Shiloh) is Christ. Shiloh will not merely have the obedience of Israel, but that *He will have the obedience of the peoples* [all nations].

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<sup>2</sup> The bracketted words are implicit. Cf. verse 3.

<sup>3</sup> Semitic languages lack a verb *to have*, so a "A wife [is] to him" would be translated: "He has a wife." Shiloh refers to Christ as the owner of the scepter. Earlier kings were mere caretakers of the royal office.

## 2 Samuel 7:12-16

2 Samuel 7:12-16 amplifies Gen 49:10. Specifically, God promises David (a descendant of Judah) that He would establish forever a Davidic royal dynasty and would establish the throne forever. Indeed, David's successors to the throne were all from his lineage until Babylon subjugated Judah in 586 B.C.

This, of course, raises questions about Gen 49 and 2 Sam 7. How is it that Judah's (and David's) royal lineage continues through millennia in which a king does not rule Israel as a kingdom? The passages did not promise that Davidic kings would continually reign over Israel, since many passages (e.g., Genesis 15:13, which predates the Genesis 49 oracle) predicted times of national exile. Rather, the passages predict continued existence of the royal lineage that would culminate in the Seed, through whom all nations of the world would be blessed.

Consider Jeremiah 22:30's famous curse on Jehoiachin, the last Davidic king of Judah:

*Thus says the LORD:*

*"Write this man [Jehoiachin] down as childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; For none of his seed shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah" [Jeremiah 22:30].*

He was written down as though childless, though he had sons.<sup>4</sup> The third and fourth stanzas of the oracle explain. None of his descendants would ever sit on David's throne. In that sense, despite having children, he and his children were exiled in Babylon.<sup>5</sup>

However, despite God's declaration (Jeremiah 22:30) that no descendant of Jeconiah would sit on the throne, someone qualified to sit on the throne always existed within the line of Judah and (more specifically) David's royal line.

This would seem to create an insoluble dilemma. Genesis 49:10 and 2 Samuel 7 assert that someone qualified to rule would always exist, but Jeremiah 22:30 says that none of those qualified would ever sit on David's throne.

This issue makes Jesus' virgin birth vitally important. Joseph, a descendant of Jeconiah (cf. Matthew 3:11-16) was humanly qualified for ruling, but came under the curse of Jeconiah. However, Jesus (as Joseph's adopted son) has the legal right to ascend to David's throne. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17) shows Jesus' right to be king through Joseph, his adoptive father. Luke 3:23-38 traces the genealogy of Mary, who was also a descendant of David through Nathan.

In a nutshell, when Adam's sin plunged humanity into sin and death, God promised Seed of Woman. That promise was further clarified through declarations that God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David—some of which received attention above. (Of course, there are other OT declarations besides the ones discussed in this article). Titus 1:2 puts God's promise of everlasting life prior to the fall (a fact that is reinforced by Genesis 3:22). It says:

*In expectation of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the times began.*

That promise is realized through the promise of Jesus, our crucified Messiah: Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life (John 6:47). What a comfort it is that God has so worked through history that:

*When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under law [Galatians 4:4].*

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift, one that He promised before the times began: Life everlasting for believers in Jesus Christ.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Chronicles 3:17f list his offspring.

<sup>5</sup> The last king of Judah, Zedekiah, was Jeconiah's brother (1 Chron 3:15; cf. 2 Kings 23:30f, where he is called Jehoahaz). No descendant of Jeconiah sat on David's throne.