Merry Christmas 2019 **[1]**

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Christmas is a time of looking back at traditions: whether religious or family. We find comfort in remembering what was good from past times, and (hopefully) anticipate more good for the coming Christmas celebrations. This is not only true for Christians, but anyone celebrating Christmas.

For this year's Christmas post, I want to remember a tradition even older than the Christmas story itself. We might even say that we are remembering traditions (in the plural). These are the various prophecies which pointed to the first Christmas night: the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
>
> verse, Isaiah 7:14

> But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
> being small among the clans of Judah,
> out of you one will come out to me that is to be ruler in Israel;
> whose goings out are from of old, from ancient times.
>
> Micah 5:2

> Thus says the LORD: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping,
> Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children,
> because they are no more.
>
> Jeremiah 31:15

> But there shall be no more gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time he has made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.
> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who lived in the land of the shadow of death, on them the light has shined.
> You have multiplied the nation.
> You have increased their joy.
> They rejoice before you according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the plunder.
> For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have

> broken as in the day of Midian.
> For all the armour of the armed man in the noisy battle, and the garments rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.
> For to us a child is born. To us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
> Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time on, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of Armies will perform this.
>
> Isaiah 9:1–7

These prophecies predate the story of Jesus's birth by hundreds of years. With other accurate predictions, such as Daniel's predictions of the rise and fall of empires, sceptics claim that the predictions were written after the events of history. But with the story of Jesus, we know for a fact that these prophecies were made before Jesus. In support of the truthfulness of the birth stories of Jesus, let us remember the veracity [2] and accuracy [3] with which these stories were written.

There are many more Old Testament references to the life, ministry, sacrifice and victory of Jesus; these are just some which concern the birth of Jesus the Messiah.

Praise be to God, who not only gave hope to the world through prophets, but to His mighty and glorious fulfilment of those promises!

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
> The same was in the beginning with God.
> All things were made through him. Without him was not anything made that has been made.
> In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness hasn’t overcome it.
> The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.
>
> John 1:1–5, 14

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