

PERSPECTIVE



DECEMBER 2023

25 Promises of the Messiah

CONTENTS



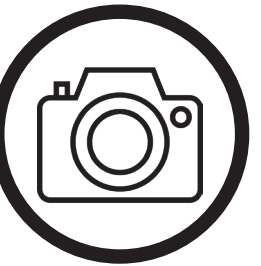
ARTICLE	1
<i>25 Promises of the Messiah</i>	
Aaron Menikoff	



BOOK HIGHLIGHT	5
<i>Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns</i>	
Written by T. David Gordon	
Recommended by Clark Cochran	



BIBLE READING PLAN	6
<i>Take Up & Read</i>	
December	



NEW MEMBERS	7
<i>Matthew and Adrienne Hunt, Marcela Soares, Evan and Emmy Taylor, Maggie Yankovich, and Keegan Zimmermann</i>	

25 Promises of the Messiah

The earliest believers did not consider Christianity to be wholly new. Instead, they understood Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection to be the fulfillment of a multitude of promises held out for God's people in the Old Testament. Our faith, like theirs, should be grounded in these promises of a Messiah who came to save his people.

Prophets foretold Him,

Infant of wonder;

Angels behold Him

On His throne;

Worthy our Saviour

Of all their praises;

Happy for ever

Are His own

—Mary MacDonald

As you head into this Christmas season, reflect on what the prophets foretold. Not every passage you'll read below is a direct promise of the incarnation, but each one predicts the coming and work of Christ. As you read these texts, marvel afresh at God's meticulous providence—his careful, unfolding plan of salvation. Throughout Scripture, we find many promises of the Messiah. Here are just 25.

1. ONE WHO WILL DEFEAT SATAN (Genesis 3:15). Satan led Eve into temptation. Sadly, she gave in. God, however, will have the last word. He promises that one day, a descendant of Eve will bruise Satan's head—a reference to a crushing death. This descendant must be Jesus, who struck the first blow at the cross (Heb. 2:14) and who will fully defeat Satan at the end of time. Thus, in the opening pages of Scripture, we find the promise of a Messiah who will fully and forever defend God's people against the work of the Evil One. Christians “do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces in the heavenly places.” We wrestle, but Christ conquered.

2. ONE WHO WILL BE A BLESSING TO THE NATIONS (Genesis 12:1–3). Long before God gave Abraham children of his own, the LORD promised he would be the father of a great nation, with descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read that Jesus is “the son of Abraham” (1:1). Thus,

Matthew teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. In Christ, the offspring of Abraham has arrived (Gal. 3:16), and all the nations will be blessed in him.

3. ONE WHO WILL BE A KING FROM ABRAHAM (Genesis 17:7). Here, God repeats his promise to Abraham. Only this time God makes clear that Abraham will be the father of royalty. Kings will arise from his descendants. Therefore, God's people were to be on the lookout for a royal heir. At his incarnation, Christ the king and “the heir of all things” arrived (Heb. 1:2).

4. ONE WHO WILL BE A REDEEMER (Job 19:25). We don't know when Job lived, perhaps in the days of Abraham. He suffered the loss of his family, his wealth, and his reputation. On his darkest day, Job had nothing but his faith to feed him. By God's grace, Job never lost hope. To the end of his days, he trusted in God, his Maker. And that's not all: Job believed that one day God would vindicate him, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.” Who is this Redeemer? Job may not have seen clearly, but he somehow knew God would save him in the flesh.

Up Thy Hill of Sorrows

Thou all alone,

Jesus, man's Redeemer,

Climbing to a Throne.

—Christian Rossetti

5. ONE WHO WILL BE FROM THE LINE OF JUDAH (Genesis 49:10). Abraham's descendant, Joseph, proved to be a truly amazing man. Though he served as prince over all of Egypt, neither he nor his children would reign over Israel. God gave that honor to one from the line of Joseph's brother, Judah. As the prophecy goes, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah.” Do you know who came from the tribe of Judah? King David. And, centuries later, as the scribes told Herod, the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, “in the land of Judah” (Matt. 2:6).

6. ONE WHO WILL BEAR GOD'S WRATH FOR US (Exodus 12:7). In response to Pharaoh's horrible treatment of God's people, the LORD promised to strike down the firstborn of every family in Egypt. God is holy and just, and he has the right to demand the lives of sinful people. All Egypt (and even all of Abraham's descendants living in Egypt) deserved to suffer under the sentence of this judgment. “None is righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). But God provided a way of escape for his people

held captive in Egypt. Each Jewish family that spread the blood of a sacrificial lamb on its doorpost would be saved. Centuries later, the wise understood the cry of John the Baptist, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus is our sacrificial Lamb.

7. ONE WHO WILL MEDIATE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN (Exodus 14:15). A merciless Pharaoh held the Israelites captive in Egypt. With his troops behind them and the Red Sea before them, all appeared lost to the descendants of Abraham. In a stunning turn of events and in their moment of desperation, “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward.’” Weary Israel followed Moses to safety. This verse is not a direct prophecy, of course. But here we have an arrow pointing us to would not just tell us to go forward, but who would lead the way, standing between God and us for our good and his glory, “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). We follow him to safety still.

8. ONE WHO WILL BE OUR SCAPEGOAT (Leviticus 16:21). God demanded his people to be holy. But the LORD knew they would fail. Therefore, God provided a regular means for them to receive his forgiveness. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest laid his hands on a live goat, confessed over it the sins of all the people, and sent that goat off into the wilderness. That goat took the sins of the people away for a year. But who would take away our sins forever? It would be Jesus who—just as the goat would die in the wilderness—would also die “outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured” (Heb. 13:12–13).

9. ONE WHO WILL BE A PROPHET OF PROPHETS (Deuteronomy 18:15). God made Moses a prophet, someone to speak the words of the LORD to the LORD’s people. Moses led as the voice of God for the people. But Moses wouldn’t lead perfectly, and he couldn’t lead forever. Moses knew the people would always need a prophet, and they would need an even greater prophet. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Moses promised, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from you brothers—it is to him you shall listen.” Jesus is the fulfillment of Deut. 18:15. The Son of God came to us as the Prophet of Prophets. He said God’s people would “know his voice” (John 10:5). The author of Hebrews confirms that Jesus is the final prophet: “In these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:2).

10. ONE WHO WILL BE A PRIEST OF PRIESTS (Psalm 110). David made a statement that has puzzled readers for centuries: “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’”

David is writing here. The LORD is Yahweh, Maker of heaven and earth. But who is “my Lord?” Jesus posed the same question in Luke 20:41. Jesus, of course, knew the answer. The Messiah had to be more than a descendant of David since the Messiah existed before David. A few verses later in Psalm 110, David calls this Lord “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Melchizedek served as “priest of God Most High,” who both blessed Abraham and received offerings from him (Gen 14:17-20). Just as Melchizedek served as Abraham’s priest and even his lord, so Jesus is David’s Lord and the eternal priest. Jesus is the one who can bless. He is the Priest of Priests promised by David (see Heb 7:11–17).

11. ONE WHO WILL BE A KING OF KINGS (2 Samuel 7:12). Though King David reigned as a mighty warrior, he never bore the title, King of Kings. That honor fell upon David’s descendant, his greater son, his offspring. God promised David that one of his sons would be a king whose kingdom is forever. That promise would intrigue and inspire the Israelites for generations. Jesus is David’s descendant, the promised king of 2 Samuel 7. The first thing Matthew says about Jesus is that he is the Son of David (Matt 1:1). He is, thus, the King of Kings.

12. ONE WHO WILL BE A SACRIFICE (2 Samuel 24). The last chapter of Samuel is sobering. Israel has sinned once again. The wrath of God hangs over Jerusalem—an angel of the Lord is about to bring the city to its knees. Seeing the sword of God about to fall on the city, David cries out, “Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father’s house” (2 Sam. 24:17). That is true leadership. Now, consider Jesus. The Son of God came into the world, and he never sinned. And yet, Jesus said, “I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15). With joy, the infant grew into a man and “endured the cross.” At Calvary, the sword of God’s judgment fell, but Jesus presented himself, like David, as a sacrifice for us all (Heb. 12:2).

13. ONE WHO WAS AND IS AND WILL BE THE SON OF GOD (Psalm 2:7). In ancient Israel, kings represented God to the people. They stood over the nation in a privileged position. God worked through the king to exercise compassion and justice in Israel. It was, therefore, no small thing for a king to be coronated. Psalm 2 is a coronation psalm. The crowned king, God’s Anointed, is given the title Son of God. But Psalm 2 is prophesying a Son of God who is no mere mortal, but God himself, in the flesh, the second person of the Trinity. The Gospel of Mark begins by describing Jesus as “the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). And at his baptism, what does Jesus hear but, “You are

my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). Make no mistake: Jesus is the eternal Son of God.

14. ONE WHO WILL FULFILL THE SIGN OF JONAH (Jonah 1:17). For three days and three nights, Jonah was in the belly of a large fish. During that time, he called out the LORD, but there was no answer. Jonah had been cast into deep waters, and the waves overwhelmed him. He had run from the LORD, and he now felt the weight of God's wrath. Jonah recounted his despair: "The waters closed in over me, to take my life" (Jonah 2:5). But the LORD intervened, saving the reluctant prophet. When the Pharisees asked for a sign that Jesus was the Son of God, Jesus said they'd only get "the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39–40). Look back at the life of Jonah, and you will find a man whose trial and salvation at sea foreshadows Jesus' death and resurrection.

15. ONE WHO WILL BE THE NEW ISRAEL (Hosea 11:1). The prophet Hosea preached about 750 years before the birth of Jesus. He spoke of the love of God for his people, a people God had saved from Egypt. The LORD, through Hosea, said: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Years later, another son would go to Egypt. Herod forced Joseph and Mary to flee south to save their baby. Wicked Herod cared most about his own power. But the flight of Joseph and Mary to Egypt proved to be no accident. They fled Egypt according to God's divine purpose so that Jesus could one day retrace the steps of God's son, Israel. As Matthew understood it, Jesus' exodus from Egypt "Was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" Jesus came into the world to live the life Israel should have lived—Jesus is the new Israel. Thankfully, he lived the life we should have lived, too.

16. ONE WHO WILL BE BORN IN BETHLEHEM (Micah 5:2). Micah had a hard word for the southern kingdom of Judah. They deserved God's judgment. But Micah had a tender word of encouragement, too. The Savior would be from Judah. In fact, he would be born in Bethlehem. And this is exactly where Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1)—in the very spot where the Israelites of his day expected the Messiah to arrive (Matt. 2:6).

O little town of Bethlehem

How still we see thee lie

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep

The silent stars go by

Yet in thy dark streets shineth

The everlasting Light

The hopes and fears of all the years

Are met in thee tonight

—Phillips Brooks

17. ONE WHO WILL BE BORN OF A VIRGIN, IMMANUEL (Isaiah 7:14). We consider Isaiah to be the prophet *par excellence*. No herald spoke with greater clarity about the coming Messiah than this man of Jerusalem. From Isaiah's lips came the promise of a virgin conceiving and bearing a son named Immanuel. Like the parting of the Red Sea, the victory of Gideon's army, and even the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this birth to a virgin is a great miracle, too. God promised this miracle long ago. Jesus is Immanuel (Matt 1:22-25).

18. ONE WHO WILL BE BOTH A CHILD AND THE PRINCE OF PEACE (Isaiah 9:1–7). The Assyrians threatened Jerusalem in Isaiah's day. King Sennacherib's men had destroyed most of Judah, and only Jerusalem survived. The people were petrified. They had no earthly reason to believe they would be spared. Remarkably, Isaiah tells them to place their hope not in kings but in the coming of a child: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). In Jesus, the Prince of Peace has come (Luke 2:11).

19. ONE WHO WILL BE A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS (Isaiah 42:1–7). At the heart of Isaiah are the Songs of the Servant—four passages that speak of a coming servant of the Lord. These four texts, when combined, paint a picture of Jesus. The first, Isaiah 42, is the promise of a servant who will be filled with the Spirit of God (Isa 42:1), the justice of God (42:4), and the righteousness of God (42:6). He will be given as "a light for the nations." Jesus identified himself as this servant, the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5; 1 John 2:8).

20. ONE WHO IS THE GLORY OF THE LORD (Isaiah 49:1–13). This is Isaiah's second servant song. Here is the promise of a man whose mouth is "like a sharp sword" (Isa. 49:2), whose salvation reaches to the end of the earth (49:6), and who shall see kings bow before him (49:7). The earth will make way for the arrival of this Servant. Mountains will flatten to become roads prepared for the coming of the Lord (Luke 3:5). The language is not

subtle—this servant is God himself. To see the Servant is to see the glory of God. As the LORD said, “In him will I be glorified (Isa 49:3). No wonder, then, that Jesus prayed, “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (John 17:5). Jesus is the glory of the LORD.

21. ONE WHO WILL PERFECTLY OBEY GOD

(Isaiah 50:4–9). In the third servant song, the servant speaks: “The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward” (Isa. 50:5). In fact, the song ends with a declaration of the servant’s personal holiness: “Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty?” Isaiah predicts a servant who perfectly trusts and obeys his heavenly Father. This is Jesus who “made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8). That baby in a manger is Jesus, the servant who would fully and forever perfectly obey his Father.

22. ONE WHO SUFFERS IN OUR PLACE (Isaiah

53). This chapter is the last and most famous of the servant songs in Isaiah. It’s the prophecy of a suffering servant: He “grew up before him like a young plant” but “was despised and rejected by men” (Isa. 53:2, 3). In the end, this servant suffered and died in the place of sinners: “But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities” (53:5). Jesus knew he fulfilled Isaiah’s promise for he said, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Jesus is the suffering servant.

23. ONE WHO WILL BRING RIGHTEOUSNESS

(Jeremiah 23:5–6). Jeremiah prophesied during Israel’s darkest day when King Nebuchadnezzar razed Jerusalem in 586 BC. Where could the people turn for help, especially given the fact that their own sin invited the invasion of the Babylonian army? Jeremiah sets their eyes on the future, to a day when a descendant would come to “execute justice and righteousness.” How did Jesus do this? By being and bringing the righteousness of God. Paul marveled at the fact that Christ was the promised king and that his righteousness could become ours: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

24. ONE WHOSE ARRIVAL WILL BE ANNOUNCED (Malachi 3:1).

The last Old Testament prophet, Malachi, ministered about 400 years before the birth of Christ. His preaching ushered in generations when God went silent—the people did not hear from their

Creator. But God would eventually break the silence. He sent a messenger to announce his arrival. The Lord himself would come. As God promised through Malachi: “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.” Jesus cited this very verse when the people asked about John the Baptist. John came to prepare us for the arrival of God in the flesh (Matt. 11:7–10).

25. ONE WHO BAPTIZES WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (John 1:33).

John the Baptist burst on the scene, finally breaking 400 years of divine silence! God had finally spoken. The messenger had finally arrived. The Lord had finally come! The people did not recognize John nor the Savior to whom John pointed. But Jesus was the one whose sandals we are not worthy to untie (John 1:27). He is the Son of God incarnate (John 1:34). And he came on a mission: to put the Spirit of God in the heart of everyone who repents and believes the Good News. John knew that in Christ, God himself had come to earth; the Lamb of God had finally arrived.

Joy to the world!

the Lord is come;

Let earth receive her King.

—Isaac Watts

Every Christmas, we celebrate the birth of a Messiah promised long before. It would do your soul good to stop and recall that for thousands of years, God’s people awaited the arrival of One who would take care of sin and death. Jesus is the Messiah they were waiting for. In the midst of wrapping paper and parties, decorations and lights, travel and family and friends, I pray that you see with eyes of faith that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the one God’s people had been expecting for centuries, and the One for whom we no longer have to wait.

Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,

Born to set Thy people free;

From our fears and sins release us;

Let us find our rest in Thee.

—Charles Wesley

— Aaron Menikoff

Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns

How Pop Culture Rewrote the Hymnal

Written by T. David Gordon

As reflected in its subtitle, *Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns: How Pop Culture Rewrote the Hymnal* examines the profound impacts that popular culture and contemporary music have had on modern-day corporate worship and why hymns seem so foreign to many Christians today.

Is worship music primarily a matter of preference? What does contemporary music offer compared to traditional forms, and does it benefit the church today more than hymns? T. David Gordon approaches these questions from many perspectives to uncover fundamental differences between these musical forms while also building a defense for traditional worship music.

Admittedly, I had not given this topic the consideration it deserves, and I enjoyed considering the observations and concepts, which ranged from historical and musical to liturgical and theological. For instance, I never appreciated pop culture's close ties to commercialism and, to an even further extent, their underlying meta-messages to our society of triviality, individuality, inconsequence, sentimentality, and contemporaneity. Are these characteristics that we, as the body of Christ, should emulate in our corporate worship? It is doubtful Paul had anything resembling these traits in mind in his exhortation to the Colossians to sing with thankfulness in their hearts to God (Col. 3:16).

My name isn't Johnny, but I often recount my reservations after first experiencing MVBC's services. "Foreign to my contemporary worship upbringing" would be putting it lightly! As time has passed, I have come to enjoy hymns and treasure their depths and the beauty of singing truths proclaimed by Christians from generations past—an echo of praises throughout the centuries to our unchanging and everlasting God.

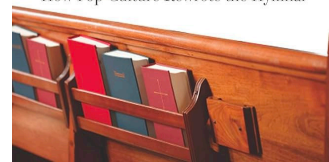
This book would benefit many Christians, ranging from those who would like to start seriously considering corporate worship forms to those who have spent years entrenched in the ongoing "worship wars" of our day. Although we may not find complete consensus on these topics, the way we offer songs of worship to God is something that warrants thoughtful attention from the church today. May this book be a means to that end.

— Recommended by Clark Cochran

T. DAVID GORDON

WHY JOHNNY CAN'T SING HYMNS

How Pop Culture Rewrote the Hymnal



Excerpts from
the Book

1

Biblically, then, neither music nor song is merely a matter of entertainment or amusement. Both are very serious business, both culturally and religiously. Song is the divinely instituted, divinely commanded, and divinely regulated means of responding to God's great works of creation, preservation, and deliverance. Worship song is both the remarkable privilege and the solemn duty of the redeemed.

— "Introduction: My Pastoral Concerns" p. 31

2

Not one of the considerations I have raised. . . is a consideration so weighty as to suggest that contemporary worship music is sinful per se... But the aggregate weight of these considerations is sufficient to give pause, and certainly. . . demonstrate that significant problems attend the rejection of traditional hymnology.

— "Concluding Thoughts" p. 169

3

We must especially be willing to both develop and teach a biblical perspective on singing praise. At a minimum, we must persuade our parishioners that singing God's praise is a solemn duty. It is something we do because God commands it. Therefore, the controlling criterion must be the same in any such matter: what would please God more?

— "Teaching Johnny Hymnody" p. 180

DECEMBER

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

December 1	Hosea 11:1–9	December 17	Romans 9:14–29
December 2	Romans 15:1–7	December 18	Matthew 2
December 3	Romans 9:1–5	December 19	Matthew 1
December 4	Romans 9:6–13	December 20	Matthew 3
December 5	Romans 15:8–13	December 21	Micah 3
December 6	Romans 15:14–21	December 22	Micah 4
December 7	Romans 15:22–29	December 23	Micah 5
December 8	Genesis 18:1–10	December 24	Matthew 2
December 9	Romans 15:30–33	December 25	Psalms 46:8–11
December 10	Romans 9:6–13	December 26	Psalms 47
December 11	Romans 9:14–29	December 27	Psalms 48
December 12	Romans 16:1–2	December 28	Psalms 49
December 13	Romans 16:3–16	December 29	John 14:1–14
December 14	Romans 16:17–24	December 30	Psalms 50
December 15	Exodus 9:13–26	December 31	Psalms 46:8–11
December 16	Romans 16:25–27		

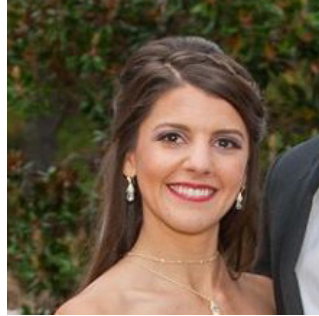
*Sermons in bold

TAKE UP & READ

NEW MEMBERS



**Matthew
Hunt**



**Adrienne
Hunt**



**Marcela
Soares**



**Evan
Taylor**



**Emmy
Taylor**



**Maggie
Yankovich**



**Keegan
Zimmermann**



Mount Vernon
BAPTIST CHURCH