

Response to Jim Lippard's
THE FABULOUS PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH
by James D. Price, Ph.D.
Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament
Temple Baptist Seminary Chattanooga, TN 37404
(423) 493-4246
e-mail drjdprice@aol.com

Jim Lippard's article was written in an attempt to discredit the claims that certain Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. His article is copyrighted with the following permission for use:

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My own statements in this response to Lippard's article are not copyrighted and may be distributed without restriction. My response consists of several sections: (1) basic flaws in Lippard's reasoning; (2) presentation of evidence for legitimate predictive prophecy; (3) response to Lippard's discussion of the significance of Messianic prophecy; and (4) response to Lippard's rejection of specific Messianic prophecies. In this latter section I follow Lippard's outline in which he divides his critique into five sections: (a) birth prophecies; (b) ministry prophecies; (c) betrayal prophecies; (d) crucifixion prophecies; and (e) conclusions.

BASIC FLAWS

Lippard's article is characterized by three basic flaws: (1) disregard of philosophical differences; (2) failure to consider historic Jewish Messianic tradition; and (3) shallow scholarship.

Philosophical Differences

Lippard provided two quotations, one from a Christian, Josh McDowell, and another from an atheist, Thomas Paine, with exactly opposite views on Jesus Christ and Messianic prophecy. He then declared Paine to be right without discussing the fundamental difference in their philosophical presuppositions. But any consideration of prophecy must surely include such a discussion. If one begins with an anti-supernatural presupposition, as did Paine and Lippard, then that automatically excludes the possibility of true predictive prophecy which is by its very nature supernatural. Thus, whenever an atheist like Paine is faced with a possible instance of predictive prophecy, he must rationalize and try to explain it away. He is satisfied with any

flimsy excuse to discredit the prophecy, because, after all, predictive prophecy cannot really happen according to his anti-supernatural presupposition.

Lippard exposed his anti-supernatural presupposition when he said: "Given our present knowledge of the chronology of the Bible's writing, however, in most cases it cannot be demonstrated that the prophetic statements do not post-date the events being predicted." However, this statement involves circular reasoning, because the scholars who post-dated prophecies did so because of their own anti-supernatural presupposition. That is, they reasoned that there is no such thing as long-range, specific predictions, therefore, any such apparent predictions must necessarily have been given after the event predicted. But such reasoning is purely subjective and philosophical, not based on valid historic evidence. It impugns the veracity of the Biblical prophets, making them fraudulent, in spite of their godly reputation. How could such alleged fraudulent literature have gained canonicity and be regarded as the divinely inspired Word of God? The ancient Jews were not gullible. The truly fraudulent literature, and there was some, was never regarded as canonical.

McDowell, on the other hand, is willing to allow the possibility of the supernatural, and thus is willing to acknowledge the existence of true predictive prophecy when it is verified by valid historic evidence. As I demonstrate later, true prophecies exist in the Hebrew Bible that cannot be post-dated, therefore, it is appropriate to conduct the discussion of Messianic prophecy under McDowell's presupposition. Any true prophecy will stand the test of valid historic scrutiny, and any false prophecy will be exposed. On the other hand, it is vain to conduct a discussion of any type of prophecy under Lippard's anti-supernatural presupposition, because such a discussion can only lead to atheism. It begins with atheism and can only lead to atheism. Lippard may pretend to reason in McDowell's philosophical arena, but his anti-supernaturalism is frequently unmasked in the way he reasons and rationalizes.

Jewish Messianic Tradition

Lippard leads his readers to believe that the early Christians invented most of the Old Testament predictions they claim were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That is, the alleged predictions were not previously regarded as Messianic prophecies, but were associated with Jesus after the fact. This is reflected in his statement: "the alleged Old Testament prophecy is not a messianic prophecy or not a prophecy at all." Lippard was strongly influenced by Gerald Sigal, a modern Jewish apologist who also opposes Christian interpretation of the Messianic prophecies. Lippard, citing Sigal, declared what they identify as "the Jewish interpretation," giving the impression that it is the historic Jewish interpretation. But what they really give is a modern Jewish interpretation, one that has developed as the result of debates with Christians since the time of Christ. The truth is that there was a strong Messianic tradition long before the time of Christ, a tradition that was well known among the Jews of Jesus' day. It was this tradition that the early Christians knew and applied to Jesus. This tradition is preserved in the pre-Christian translations of the Old Testament made by the Jews, such as the Septuagint (LXX), and the Aramaic Targums. These translations were somewhat standardized by the time of Christ, so the Messianic traditions contained in them have remained rather unaffected by later debates with the Christians.

The post-Christians translations made by the Jews reflect the effects of their debates with the Christians and their resultant anti-Christian bias. It is no surprise that the post-Christian Jewish apologists switched from the Septuagint to the later Greek translations of the Old Testament.

The ancient Jewish Messianic traditions are also still present in the Talmudic literature, although somewhat tainted by the post-Christian debates. These ancient Jewish sources indicate that the passages in the Old Testament understood by the early Christians as Messianic were also understood by the ancient Jews as Messianic. Alfred Edersheim, a Christian Jew and scholar of the nineteenth century, one much more acquainted with the complexities of Messianic prophecy than Thomas Paine, compiled a list of 456 such references to the Messiah in ancient Jewish literature: 75 from the Pentateuch, 243 from the Prophets, and 138 from the Writings, supported by more than 558 separate quotations from the rabbinic literature.¹ So, although Lippard and Sigal may not regard the passages as Messianic prophecies, they were regarded as such by both ancient Jews and Christians. Lippard and Sigal have essentially disregarded these ancient Jewish Messianic traditions, and have invented a modern definition of what constitutes a Messianic prophecy--one that suits their own apologetic agenda. I will call attention to these ancient traditions in my responses to Lippard's discussion of specific Messianic passages.

Shallow Scholarship

As I mentioned earlier, Lippard and anti-supernatural proponents in general rationalize their position, and are satisfied with anything that seems to discredit an alleged Messianic prophecy. If they find a possible alternate interpretation, they latch onto it as evidence that the passage is not Messianic, or as evidence that the passage is not a prophecy. But this is shallow scholarship. A possible alternate interpretation proves nothing. One must also refute the possibility that the passage can be Messianic or can be a prophecy. Often their alternate interpretations, which may appear good on the surface, are found to introduce inconsistencies into the broader context which violate the sound rules of hermeneutical exposition. I will call attention to instances of their shallow scholarship as I respond to Lippard's discussion of specific Messianic passages.

Another point related to Lippard's scholarship is the various ways in which the New Testament writers, especially Matthew, used the term "fulfilled." Often the term was used in its literal sense, meaning that the author understood an event in the life of Jesus to be the literal fulfillment of a specified Old Testament prophecy. At other times the New Testament writers used the term in its figurative sense, meaning that the author saw some significant parallel between an event in the history of Israel and a similar event in the life of Jesus. The New Testament writers assumed that the common sense discernment of their audience would distinguish between their literal and figurative use of the term, without a specific indication in the text. In those instances where the New Testament writers used the term in its figurative sense, Christians do not claim that there was a literal fulfillment of prophecy, or even that the cited Old

¹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life And Times Of Jesus The Messiah*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), Appendix IX, vol. II, pp. 710-41; all my references to the rabbinic literature come from this source.

Testament passages is a prophecy. Lippard seems to have failed to use common sense discernment in these situations, or else he deliberately appealed to some of these cases in order to strengthen his argument and mislead his readers. But such tactics only expose his shallow scholarship.

VALID PROPHECIES

The Old Testament contains several clearly validated long-range, specific prophecies the proclamation of which cannot be post-dated, and the fulfillment of which has been documented. These confirm the fact that such prophecies exist and that it is appropriate to assume the possibility of true, long-range specific prophecies in discussion of Messianic prophecy.

The 70 Year Captivity

The prophet Jeremiah was a prophet whose prophetic ministry is historically validated and dated. His ministry spanned the reigns of King Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah (c. 627-583 B.C.). He recorded the early events leading up to the captivity, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the events immediately following. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C. cf. Jer. 25:1) he proclaimed the following prophecy:

Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: "Because you have not heard My words, behold, I will send and take all the families of the north," says the Lord, "and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." (Jer. 25:8-11).

A short time later, Jeremiah added an additional detail to the prophecy:

For thus says the Lord: "After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place." (Jer. 29:10)

The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded twice (2 Chron. 36:19-23; Ezra 1:1-4):

Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up." (2 Chron. 36:19-23)

Jeremiah was an old man when he proclaimed this prophecy. He lived to experience the destruction of Jerusalem, the fulfillment of the first part of the prophecy. However he died shortly after that in Egypt. There is no way this prophecy can be post-dated. The Jewish scribes who lived seventy years later were aware of the prophecy, attributed it to Jeremiah, and regarded it as being fulfilled in their time. Only an anti-supernaturalist would dare to post-date this prophecy.

The Josiah Prophecy

After the death of Solomon about 931 B.C., the northern ten tribes of Israel rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam, and under the leadership of Jeroboam they became an independent kingdom. Shortly after that Jeroboam established pagan centers of worship in Bethel and Dan. It was while Jeroboam was worshipping at the shrine in Bethel that the Lord sent an unnamed prophet to proclaim a prophetic judgment on the shrine and its priests. The prophecy reads:

And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.'" And he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the Lord has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out." So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Arrest him!" Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord. (1 Kings 13:1-5)

The fulfillment of this prophecy took place in the early years of the reign of King Josiah (c. 628 B.C.), about 300 years later. The fulfillment is recorded in 2 Kings 23:15-16:

Moreover the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the wooden image. As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

It is true that the Book of Kings was written after both of these events, the prophecy and its fulfillment. But there is no reason to suppose that the accounts of the prophecy and its fulfillment were fabricated and not derived from reliable ancient records. Why would the historian jeopardize the integrity of his history by including fraudulent stories? Only an anti-supernaturalist would fabricate such an explanation to avoid the reality of long-range, specific prophecy.

Roman Destruction of Jerusalem

Daniel foretold the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple: "And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." (Dan 9:26)

This prophecy must refer to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in A.D. 70. In Daniel's day, Jerusalem was destroyed and Solomon's Temple was in ruins. Daniel spoke of this as a future event, so he anticipated the rebuilding of the city and sanctuary. No matter how the date of the Book of Daniel is determined, whether the 6th century B.C. (the conservative date) or the 2nd century B.C. (the liberal date), this prophecy cannot be post-dated. Actual manuscripts of the book exist dating from the first century B.C.

This ends the list of verifiable long-range predictions. Many more could be documented; these are only a few examples.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY

Lippard correctly described the Biblical standards for a true prophet of God. He then set up an alleged dilemma, based on the Biblical standards of a true prophet, according to which he claimed that "there are messianic prophecies which are not fulfilled by Jesus (and which will not be fulfilled in the future)." Then he concluded:

These standards entail that either Jesus was not the Messiah or the prophecies in question were not made by a true prophet of God. Both horns of the dilemma have the consequence that any form of Christianity which maintains biblical inerrancy is false.

This is a false dilemma on both counts. His allegation that some Messianic prophecies were not fulfilled by Jesus is based on his shallow scholarship which cannot stand up under careful scrutiny. Many of his denials are based on prophecies that relate to the future Messianic Kingdom. These of course have not been fulfilled by Jesus or by anyone else. But to deny the possibility of their future fulfillment, as his statement above implies, is another evidence of his anti-supernatural presupposition. He reasons that they "will not be fulfilled in the future" because true predictive prophecy is impossible. He reasons further that since these prophecies have not been fulfilled that the Biblical prophets must not be true prophets of God, furthermore evangelical Christianity [and orthodox Judaism by implication] must be false and the Bible full of errors.

On the other hand, evangelical Christians and orthodox Jews believe that the mass of prophecies that have been fulfilled in history are evidence of the certainty of the fulfillment of prophecies that still relate to the future. Such reasoning is based on evidence, not on philosophical presupposition. There is no a priori reason to deny the possibility of the fulfillment of prophecies relating to the Messianic Kingdom and other future events.

Christians do not claim that Jesus fulfilled those prophecies that relate to the Messianic Kingdom. Jesus taught that He must die as a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the world, that He must be buried and rise again from the dead on the third day--all of this in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. He taught that He must ascend to the Father and return again sometime in the future as King to set up the Messianic Kingdom foretold in the Old Testament. Lippard, in his shallow scholarship, constantly alludes to the fact that Jesus was not a king, had no kingdom, and did not function as a ruler, as though these facts refute the Messianic claims of Christians--

claims that Christians never make. So, much of his argumentation does not address the real issues.

Furthermore, Lippard alleged that Jesus was a false prophet when he stated: "It could be argued (and has been argued by Jews at least since the third century) that Jesus led Jews astray from their religion and was therefore a false prophet." [his Endnote 1]. These false charges have never been substantiated. Moses identified a false prophet as one who would lead the Jews away from worshipping only Jehovah, the God of Israel, and who would lead them instead to worship false gods (Deut 13:1-5). Jesus always remained faithful to Jehovah; He never advocated the worship of any other god--He was a true monotheist. He practiced and taught true Biblical piety, holiness, purity, honesty, integrity, love, mercy, and justice. His teachings were truly profound. He exposed the hypocrisy of certain Jewish traditions, but He never opposed that form of Jewish religion that was consistent with the Old Testament.

The Jewish antagonists of Jesus' day attempted repeatedly to entrap Him on religious matters, but He always demonstrated that His teaching and practice was consistent with the letter and spirit of the Mosaic law. He even gave them this challenge: "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" (John 8:46). When the Jewish Sanhedrin finally condemned Him to death, it was not for any matter of religion but because He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and that He would come in the future to receive the Messianic Kingdom (Mark 14:61-64; cf. Dan. 7:13-14). This they interpreted as blasphemy, not as leading the Jews into idolatry. Many modern Jews regard Him as the greatest Jew who ever lived; and even though they do not accept Him as their Messiah, they regard Him as the Messiah of the Gentiles.

BIRTH PROPHECIES

Lippard discussed several prophecies that Christians relate to the birth of Jesus: Isaiah 7:14, the prophecy of His virgin birth; Micah 5:2, the prophecy of His place of birth; prophecies of Messiah's ancestry; Jeremiah 31:15, a prophecy related to Herod's slaughter of the innocent children; Hosea 11:1, a prophecy referring to Messiah return from Egypt; Daniel 9:24-27, a prophecy concerning the time of Messiah's appearance. In the sections that follow I discuss Lippard's treatment of these prophecies.

Isaiah 7:14

This prophecy foretells the virgin birth of the Messiah. It reads: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Lippard listed four problems with this passage: (1) the word "virgin" is a mistranslation, and should be translated "young woman" or "maiden"; (2) Jesus' mother never called Him Immanuel; (3) the prophecy was given to Ahaz, King of Judah, and was fulfilled in Isaiah 8:3-4; and (4) the early Christians rejected the virgin birth.

(1) The meaning of the Hebrew word "almah." The key to an understanding of the meaning of this passage is the Septuagint (LXX) translation which uses the Greek word "parthenos" (virgin) to translate the word "almah." The LXX was translated by Jews before the time of Christ and so preserves the pristine Jewish Messianic tradition before it was affected by

the debates with the early Christians. Further evidence that this passage was regarded by the early Jews as Messianic is indicated by the Talmudic reference of 7:21 (an integral part of the whole prophecy) to Messianic times.² Thus it is wrong for Lippard to dismiss the significance of the LXX here. It is true that the Greek word "parthenos" may sometimes not mean virgin in the strict technical sense of the term, but the normal meaning of the word should be understood unless the context demands otherwise.

It is true that the Hebrew word "almah" is also translated in other places as "maid" or "maiden," but one must not forget that these words are synonyms for "virgin" as any English dictionary clearly indicates. Our present immoral culture has obscured the issue, but in earlier English culture (and Hebrew culture) an unmarried young woman was expected to be a virgin. So, whether one referred to an unmarried young woman as a virgin or as a maiden, the same thing was meant. This was such a strong expectation in ancient Hebrew culture that a girl guilty of fornication was put to death, and a raped young woman was unsuited for marriage. Thus Joseph thought to set Mary aside when he learned she was with child, and was only prevented from doing so by angelic intervention (Matt 1:18-25). Thus Jewish culture expects the word to mean virgin in this context.

It is true that Hebrew has another word "bethulah" that means virgin. But this word is used to refer to any virgin, ranging from a little girl to a mature young woman; whereas the word "almah" refers only to a sexually mature young woman.³ In the Hebrew Bible the word refers only to young women that are virgins. So for example, Genesis 24 relates the story of the betrothal of Rebekah to Isaac. In verse 16 she is referred to as "a virgin ["bethulah"], neither had any man known her"; whereas in verse 43 she is referred to as a virgin ["almah"]. In such contexts the words are synonymous. No usage of the word "almah" in the Hebrew Bible can be shown to mean other than a sexually mature virgin, and this passage is no exception.

The context of this passage demands the sense of virgin here. The prophecy is called a "sign" [Hebrew "'oth"] which frequently implies something supernatural. In verse 11 the Lord told King Ahaz: "Ask a sign ['oth] for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." Such a sign obviously could have been anything, such as the sign given later to King Hezekiah: the sun moving back in its orbit by ten degrees (Isa 38:7-8). But Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, so the LORD gave His own sign, the sign of the virgin born Messiah, not to be fulfilled in the days of Ahaz, but in the future. Now only a virgin birth would qualify as such a sign--there is nothing supernatural about a young woman becoming pregnant, it happens all the time. Lippard refers to the foretold event as "biological impossible"--another indication of his anti-supernatural presupposition. But a number of biologically impossible

² In Ber. R. 48, on Gen. 18:7, the words "Abraham ran unto the herd" are related with Isa 7:21 which is applied to Messianic times.

³ F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew And English Lexicon Of The Old Testament* (Oxford, 1955), p. 761.

events have happened. Adam was created without father or mother. Eve was made from Adam's flesh and bone without father or mother. Isaac was conceived when his parents were both beyond the age of possible conception. Several people were raised from the dead. All of these events were biologically impossible, but they happened nevertheless; unless one rationalizes, as Lippard does, that such things are a priori impossible and so the stories must be legends or myths.

(2) Mary and Immanuel. Lippard asserted that Jesus' mother never called Him Immanuel. This is an argument from silence, which proves nothing—another example of Lippard's shallow scholarship. On the other hand, the inclusion of the name in the quotation of Isaiah 7:14 implies that Mary did call Him by that name. Matthew saw the significance of the name and so translated it as "God with us," but he must not have seen the need of recording an actual event in which Mary, or anyone else, called Jesus Immanuel. It should be noted that the Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14 could be translated either "she shall call His name Immanuel" or "you shall call His name Immanuel." The Hebrew is ambiguous at this point. The LXX translators evidently understood it as the latter and interpreted it as "they shall call His name Emmanuel." This is how it is quoted in Matthew 1:23. So Lippard's argument is irrelevant.

(3) The prophecy was given to Ahaz. Lippard erroneously stated that the prophecy was given to King Ahaz and was fulfilled in 8:3-4. This is another example of Lippard's shallow scholarship. After King Ahaz refused to ask a sign from the Lord, Isaiah turned to the elders of the house of David and said: "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you [plural] to weary men, but will you [plural] weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you [plural] a sign . . ." (7:13-14). Thus, God offered a sign to the king, but when the king refused the sign, the Lord gave His own sign, not to a king but to a nation, not an immediate physical sign but a distant Messianic sign.

Furthermore, the sign was not fulfilled in 8:3-4. There it says that the prophetess, Isaiah's wife, not the "almah," conceived and bore a son. She called his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, This does not sound anything like Immanuel which means "God with Us."⁴ It is true that the word "Immanuel" occurs twice in chapter 8 (vss. 8, 10). But the passage from verse 5 to 10 is on another subject not related to the son born in 8:3-4; it is a pronouncement of judgment, not of deliverance and comfort. This is confirmed by the fact that in 9:6-7 the promised Son is still seen as coming in the future. It is true that in 8:18 Isaiah said: "Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts who dwells in Mount Zion." But this must not confuse the issue. The signs were in the meanings of their names, one of which meant "Speed the Spoil, Hasten the Booty" (a sign of judgment), and the other meant "A Remnant Shall Return" (a sign of future restoration). The sign of the virgin born Messiah would be much more than a name, it would be a person who would be God with Us.

⁴ Some Christians do understand a double fulfillment, one in 8:3-4 and another in the future virgin born Messiah. But Lippard is right, a double fulfillment is impossible. But he is wrong in seeing the fulfillment in Isaiah's son.

(4) The early Christians rejected the virgin birth. Based on statements made by J. Edward Barrett, Lippard alleged that the early Christians rejected the virgin birth. This is based partly on the outmoded idea that the Gospels were written relatively late and that they reflect theological ideas developed after the departure of first generation Christians. These antiquated ideas must be set aside because the manuscript evidence from the first and second century no longer allows that possibility.⁵ Furthermore, the writings of the early Church Fathers do not support such a thesis. The Gospels must be regarded as genuine, not late fabrications. The fact that two Gospels do not record the birth of Jesus is not significant. The fact that two record the virgin birth is more than adequate. One record is sufficient to establish any event in the life of Jesus.

Lippard asserts that 1 Timothy 1:3-4 implies that Paul rejected the virgin birth, but that passage is vague and mentions nothing of the birth of Jesus or Mary's lack of virginity. If Paul really rejected the doctrine he could have been much more specific than that. But Paul made a much clearer reference to the virgin birth when he wrote: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal 4:4) The phrase "made of a woman" is significant because Paul usually referred to Jesus Christ as the seed of Abraham or the seed of David. No, Lippard's shallow scholarship is inadequate here.

Micah 5:2

This prophecy foretells the birthplace of Messiah; it reads:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Lippard rejects this prophecy as being fulfilled by Jesus because (1) Bethlehem Ephrathah may be either a place [the city of Bethlehem in the land of Judah] or a person [Bethlehem the son of Ephrathah (1 Chron. 4:4; 2:50-51)]; and (2) Jesus failed to meet the condition of being a "ruler in Israel."

(1) Bethlehem Ephrathah may be either a place or a person. The possibility of Bethlehem Ephrathah being a person is a smoke screen--another example of Lippard's shallow scholarship. That name does not appear in the references he gave. In one place the reference is to "Ephrathah the father of Bethlehem" (1 Chron. 4:4), and in the other it refers indirectly to Bethlehem as the grandson of Ephrathah (1 Chron. 2:50-51). However, in the Hebrew Bible, personal names do not appear in the form Bethlehem Ephrathah, but only in the form Bethlehem the son of

⁵ See K. Aland and B. Aland, *The Text Of The New Testament*, trans. by Erroll Rhodes (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 83-102. P52, a papyrus fragment of the Gospel of John dates about A.D. 125 at the latest. It was copied within one generation of the date John composed the book (about A.D. 90). The Gospel of John was the last of the Gospels to be written. There are eight early manuscripts of Matthew, one of Mark, four of Luke, and nine of John. These do not include the many more of a later time.

Ephrathah. So the name under discussion can only be a place name, not a personal name. Lippard ignored the fact that this passage has been traditionally regarded among the Jews as foretelling the birthplace of the Messiah.⁶ Matthew recorded the fact that the scribes in the days of Jesus' birth knew this tradition (Matt 2:3-6). Jesus was born in Bethlehem, so He did satisfy that part of the prophecy.

(2) Jesus was not a "ruler in Israel." Lippard acknowledged that "Jesus qualifies by birthplace but fails to meet the condition of being 'ruler in Israel.'" Lippard recognized that Christians understand that this rulership will be fulfilled in the second coming of Christ, yet he refuses to permit Christians this twofold aspect of Messianic prophecy. He insists that if Jesus did not fulfill those details that relate to the future Messianic Kingdom, then he is disqualified as the Messiah. But such shallow scholarship ignores two distinct aspects of the Messianic mission. How can Messiah be born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Isa 7:14; Mic 5:2), and also come in the clouds to receive the kingdom from the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13-14)? How can Messiah suffer and die for the sins of the world (Isa 53), and also rule and reign forever as king (Dan 7:14, 27)? Both of these ideas are part of the Messianic tradition of the ancient Jews and Christians. Either there was to be two Messiahs, as some Jewish tradition seems to assume, or there was to be two phases of Messiah's ministry: one as the suffering servant, another as a conquering king, as the Christians understand it. Lippard demands that Jesus fulfill the requirements of two distinct Messiahs or the requirements of two distinct phases of Messiah's ministry. Either way, his demands are illogical and unreasonable. So there is nothing wrong with concluding that Jesus qualifies by birthplace, and will qualify as ruler in Israel in the future Messianic Kingdom.

Problems of Genealogy

Lippard listed several problems of a genealogical nature that relate to the Messianic claims of Jesus: (1) the prophecies that Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham (Gen 12:2-3; 22:18) do not mention Messiah; (2) prophecies that Messiah would be of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10; Micah 5:2), of the line of Jesse (Isa 11:1, 10), and of the house of David (2 Sam 7:12-16; Psa 132:11; Jer 23:5) refer only to kings; (3) the genealogies of Jesus recorded in Matthew and Luke contradict each other; (4) both genealogies trace Jesus' lineage through Joseph, which, if the virgin birth is true, deny Jesus proper lineage; and (5) both genealogies include Jeconiah who was excluded from having a descendant as king by a curse from God (Jer 22:30).

(1) A descendant of Abraham. Lippard denied that Genesis 12:2-3 and 22:18 mention the Messiah, so Jesus' claim to be a descendant of Abraham has nothing to do with fulfilling Messianic prophecy. Again Lippard's shallow scholarship fails to acknowledge that ancient

⁶ It is clearly stated so in the Aramaic Targum Jonathan which reads, "From you shall come forth before me Messiah to exercise authority over Israel whose name is spoken from of old, from everlasting." It is also applied to the Messiah in Pirque de R. Eliez. c3 and by the later rabbis.

Jewish tradition identifies these passages with the Messiah.⁷ Jesus was a descendant of Abraham, and so did satisfy the Messianic expectations associated with these passages.

(2) Prophecies refer only to kings. See response (2) to Micah 5:2 above.

(3) The genealogies are contradictory. Lippard alleges that the genealogy of Jesus recorded by Matthew and the one recorded by Luke contradict one another. This is another example of his shallow scholarship. Luke's genealogy extends back to Adam whereas Matthew's extends only to Abraham; there is no contradiction there. From Abraham to David both genealogies agree; there is no contradiction there. From David to Jesus the genealogies are entirely different (except possibly for Shealtiel and Zerubbabel). Matthew traces the descent from David through Solomon, the kings of Judah, and their subsequent descendants to Joseph, providing Jesus with a legal right to the throne of David. Luke traces the descent from David through his son Nathan by an entirely different path. So from David on the genealogies differ but they do not contradict one another.

Various possible methods of harmonizing the two genealogies exist which Lippard essentially ignored. For example Joseph, whose natural father was Jacob, may have been adopted by Heli. Another possibility is that Matthew recorded the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke recorded the genealogy of Mary. This is supported by the fact that Matthew recorded Joseph's dream in which the angel addressed him as "Joseph son of David" (Matt 1:20); whereas Luke recorded the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary: "the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32), thus indicating that the virgin born Son would derive His right to the throne through Mary's ancestry. This second possible explanation is the more likely one and is compatible with the Greek text of Luke; Luke's text does not use the word "begot" or the word "son" (except once) to express genealogical descent, but merely the grammatical genitive case. Notice that in the English translation the word "son" is in italics. The Greek text can be translated thus: "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed of Joseph) of Heli" (Luke 3:23), where the word "son" is understood in its broader sense of "grandson." So Joseph's relationship to Heli could be merely that of son-in-law.

The difference in length of the genealogies between David and Jesus are explained by Matthew's words "So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations" (Matt 1:17). Matthew deliberately restricted the number of ancestors to 42 (3 x 14) to fit into his mnemonic formula, whereas Luke's genealogical list was more complete. This explains why Jehoiakim⁸ was omitted from the list between Josiah and

⁷ Both passages speak clearly of blessings that will come from the seed of Abraham. Genesis 22:18 is explained Messianically in Bemid. R. 2 in connection with Numbers 2:32.

⁸ The curse on Jehoiakim was not the same as that on Jeconiah. The curse on Jeconiah deprived him of a descendant who could sit on the throne of David. The curse on Jehoiakim did not do so. But the effect was the same, the curse on his son Jeconiah brought his dynastic line to an end.

Jeconiah, as well as others in the period between Jeconiah and Joseph. In addition, Lippard listed some alleged discrepancies between the genealogical records in First Chronicles and those in the New Testament, but these are best explained by the fact that the records in Chronicles are not complete, as demonstrated by a comparison of the records of Chronicles with the records of the other Old Testament books.

(4) Both lists deprive Jesus of proper ancestry. Lippard assumed that both lists provide contradictory ancestry of Joseph and thus deprive Jesus of proper ancestry to claim the throne of David. However, I demonstrated above that Luke's genealogy is very likely that of Mary; if so, the problem is resolved. But even if both lists provide ancestries for Joseph, the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary indicate that she also was a descendant of David, "the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). So in either case the problem is solved. Again Lippard did not do his homework.

(5) Cursed Jeconiah is in both records. Lippard saw a problem with both lists containing Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, especially because Matthew lists the father of Shealtiel as Jeconiah and Luke lists his father as Neri. Lippard then concluded that the curse on Jeconiah also affected Luke's genealogy and disqualified Jesus on both counts. Two solutions have been proposed: (a) Shealtiel and Zerubbabel are not the same persons in the two lists; (b) Jeconiah had no natural children according to Jeremiah's curse (Jer 22:30) but Shealtiel the son of Neri became his adopted son and so legal heir to the throne of David, and natural heir to the throne through his descent from David through Nathan. In either case the curse on Jeconiah does not pass on to the successive generations.

Jeremiah 31:15--Herod's Murder of the Innocents

Matthew 2:16-18 records an incident in which Herod ordered his troops to slaughter the little children of Bethlehem. Matthew related this event to Jeremiah 31:15:

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

"A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more."

Lippard listed two problems with this passage: (1) it is not a prophecy of children being killed but a lament over the Babylonian captivity; and (2) the incident probably did not happen because it was not mentioned by Josephus.

(1) Not a prophecy. Lippard is right that this passage is not a Messianic prophecy; it is an instance where Matthew used the term "fulfilled" in its figurative sense. Matthew saw a

similarity between the mourning of the people of Israel for their children who were carried off as captives to Babylon and the mourning of the people in the same area for the massacre of their children. Christians do not regard this passage from Jeremiah as a Messianic prophecy. Lippard's shallow scholarship seeks problems where none exist.

(2) The incident did not happen. Next Lippard questioned the historic validity of Matthew's account. But again he argues from silence--a common error of his shallow scholarship. The fact that Josephus did not record the event is of no consequence. Josephus did not write an exhaustive history of Herod's life, but picked those events in Herod's life that satisfied his own political and literary objectives. Josephus did record several of Herod's atrocities, but this one failed to attract the interest of Josephus for two possible reasons: (a) the event was rather insignificant from his perspective, involving a relatively small number of children in a small village; and (b) it was related to a Jewish Messianic theme which Josephus regularly avoided.

Hosea 11:1, Messiah's Return from Egypt.

Matthew referred to this passage as "fulfilled" when Jesus' family returned from Egypt. Matthew wrote: "When he [Joseph] arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Matt. 2:14-15). Lippard was right in denying that this is a Messianic prophecy; it is another example of Matthew using the term "fulfilled" in its figurative sense. Early Jewish tradition regarded the Messiah as idealized Israel, and saw Messianic implications in many of the events in Israel's history. Matthew, in harmony with this Messianic tradition, saw such a connection with this event in the life of Jesus. Thus he figuratively spoke of it as "fulfilling" [making complete] the saying in Hosea. Lippard discredits his scholarship by appealing to such passages as these.

Matt 2:23--He Shall Be Called a Nazarene.

In Matthew 2:23 the author wrote: "And he came and dwelt in the city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" Lippard correctly asserted that there is no such prophecy worded like that. However, the ancient Jews had eight names for the Messiah which were derived from references to the Messiah in the writings of the prophets [note the plural here and in the verse above]. The most prominent of these names was the name "Tsemach" or "Branch."⁹ Another name was "Netser" a synonym of "Tsemach" which also means "Branch." In the ancient Jewish Targum, this name is applied to the Messiah in Isaiah 11:1 which reads "And the King shall come forth from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah shall grow great from the sons of his sons." The Hebrew name of the city of

⁹ The name "Tsemach" is applied to Messiah in Jer 23:5; 33:15; and Zech 3:8. The ancient Jewish Targum of Jer. 23:5 reads: "Behold the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will raise up to David the righteous Messiah, and the King shall reign and prosper." On Jer. 33:15 it reads: "In those days and at that time, I will raise up to David the righteous Messiah, and He will administer justice." On Zech. 3:8 it reads: "Behold I am bringing forth My Servant the Messiah."

Nazareth ("Notsereth") is derived from the same Hebrew root as the name "Netser," and has the meaning "offshoot" with an implication of insignificance. This probably explains Nathanael's derogatory question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). A resident of Nazareth was called in Hebrew a "Notsri" or Nazarene. In later years the Jews referred to a Christian as a "notsri" or Nazarene, probably a term of derision. That term is still used of Christians today in Israel. Thus, while the exact quotation appears nowhere in Scripture, it represents the consensus of what the prophets said was one of the names of the Messiah, and it is another instance where Matthew used the term "fulfilled" in its figurative sense.

Daniel 9:24-27, the Time of Messiah's Appearance.

This prophecy states:

(24) Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

(25) Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

(26) And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

(27) Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.

Evangelical Christians usually regard this passage to define the time when the Messiah will come, namely sixty-nine weeks of years ($69 \times 7 = 483$ years) after the issue of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Christians have determined several explanations of this passage that define a time that coincides with the time of Jesus. Lippard rejects each of these explanations for two reasons: (1) the alleged decrees do not meet the criterion of commanding the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple; and (2) the translation and interpretation of the passage do not conform to the Masoretic punctuation of verse 25 as indicated by the accents.

(1) Only two decrees are regarded by Christians as favorable to an interpretation pointing to the time of Jesus: (a) the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra described in Ezra 7:11-28; and (b) the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah described in Nehemiah 2:1-6.

Regarding the decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra, Lippard rejects it because it does not specifically contain reference to rebuilding the city and Temple. However, the recorded content of the decree may not have been complete, as is known about the decree of Cyrus; and Archer pointed out that Ezra 9:9 implies that the fuller decree really did contain such a command. This decree was issued in 458 B.C., so an elapse of 483 years would put the coming of the Messiah in A.D. 26, which was near the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Lippard himself said: "This works

fairly well"; so this explanation is satisfactory, even though some Christians prefer an alternate view.

Regarding the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah, Lippard stated that this "is not a decree at all." He is right that Nehemiah did not record the text of a decree, but the fact that letters were written is made clear in the text (verse 7), and the intent of the letters is also given by such statements as: "And I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.' Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), 'How long will your journey be? And when will you return?' So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time" (Neh 2:5-6). Clearly Nehemiah requested permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild it, and the king sent him. The later text of the chapter indicates that permission was granted for the restoration of the Temple as well. So, although the text of the decree was not recorded, its existence and intent are clearly indicated. Thus the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah is a legitimate possibility as the starting point of the sixty-nine weeks of years.

Lippard rejected the decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah, which was issued in 445 B.C. because the 483 years would put the coming of Messiah at A.D. 39, a time that was too late for the ministry of Jesus. His point is well taken if one is satisfied with shallow scholarship. Sir Robert Anderson's attempt to explain this apparent discrepancy is ingenious, and is accepted by many Christians because his explanation seems to account for the 483 years to the very day of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Like Lippard, other Christians are disturbed by Anderson's explanation because he used unnatural units of time--years of 360 days, rather than 365 days, based on the assumption that prophetic years contain only 360 days. Robert Newman provided an alternate explanation that does not involve this compromise. He pointed out that the unit of measure in the text of Daniel is the "shabua" (heptad of years, or a Sabbatical cycle), not years or days. According to Jewish custom, numerical considerations are limited to the nearest whole unit of measure, in this case a heptad. So taking into account that the decree was issued sometime in the middle of the first heptad, and Jesus was crucified sometime during the sixty-ninth heptad, this decree satisfies the conditions. It is interesting that Lippard did not criticize Newman's explanation, other than to accuse him of violating the Hebrew punctuation.

(2) Lippard, based on the work of Sigal, points out that the punctuation of the Hebrew text, as indicated by the Masoretic accents, places a major division of the verse between the seven weeks of years and the sixty-two weeks of years in verse 25. This makes the passage state that the Messiah will come after the seven weeks of years, and another Messiah after the sixty-two weeks. He is right, the Masoretic accent known as Athnach (the second strongest of the disjunctive accents) separates the seven weeks from the sixty-two weeks. This would seem almost conclusive if one were satisfied with shallow scholarship. But one must know more than the elementary concepts of the Masoretic accents before such conclusions can be made. The most important principle regarding the Masoretic accents is that they are primarily musical and only secondarily grammatical. William Wickes, the most highly respected authority on the

Masoretic accents, stated: "The character of the accentuation is . . . preeminently musical."¹⁰ Likewise, Israel Yeivin, a modern Masoretic authority wrote that the primary function of the accents "is to represent the musical motifs to which the Biblical text was chanted in the public reading."¹¹

My own research on the Masoretic accents has verified this principle.¹² The placement of the accents of a verse are usually in harmony with the grammar of the Biblical text; but they are governed primarily by the musical demands of cantillation, and especially in poetry (as is this text of Daniel), the musical demands may overrule the grammatical demands. For example, in 1 Chronicles 1:7, a prose section, the text reads: "The sons of Javan were Elisha and Tarshishah, Kittim and Rodanim." This verse has a predicate with a fourfold compound predicate complement. In this verse the Athnach separates Tarshishah from Kittim. Grammatically there is no reason to place the major division of the verse in the middle of the compound predicate complement. According to the accents the verse should be punctuated "The sons of Javan were Elisha and Tarshishah; Kittim and Rodanim." Such punctuation is grammatically illogical. But the situation is even worse in 1 Chronicles 1:13-16 which constitutes only one sentence in English (and Hebrew): "Canaan begot Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Gergashite, and the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, and the Arvadite, and the Zemrite, and the Hamathite." This sentence contains a compound object of the verb "begot" with eleven elements each joined with the others by the conjunction "and." Yet this compound object is divided into four segments by the strongest disjunctive accent in Hebrew: Silluq with Soph Pasuq. There is no grammatical reason to divide this sentence into four segments. The reason for such grammatically illogical divisions is musical, due strictly to cantillation not grammar and syntax.

Such grammatically illogical divisions occur often, especially in poetry. So for example, in the very verse under discussion (Dan 9:25) a rather strong disjunctive accent (Tiphcha) separates "seven" from "weeks," words that are obviously grammatically related; a disjunctive accent (Garshaim) separates "weeks" from "sixty-two," again words that are obviously grammatically related; and a second time the rather strong disjunctive accent (Tiphcha) separates "troublesome" from "times," words that are obviously grammatically related. So one cannot take an elementary approach to the accents of any verse. The punctuation of a translation, although often guided by the Masoretic accentuation, must be governed by the grammar, syntax, and exposition of the Hebrew text. These linguistic features often must overrule the musical

¹⁰ William Wickes, *Two Treatises On The Accentuation Of The Old Testament*, rev. ed. (1881-87; reprint New York: KTAV, 1970) II, p. 12.

¹¹ Israel Yeivin, *Introduction To The Tiberian Masorah*, trans. and ed. by E. J. Revell, Society of Biblical Literature Masoretic Studies, Number 5 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980), p. 158.

¹² James D. Price, *The Syntax Of The Masoretic Accents In The Hebrew Bible*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, Vol. 27 (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); also James D. Price, *A Concordance Of The Hebrew Accents In The Hebrew Bible* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995).

cantillation. So in this passage, the punctuation preferred by Lippard, Sigal, and the RSV divide the verse so that it makes little sense. It calls for the introduction of two different Messiahs where the text obviously refers to only one; otherwise the laws of linguistics expect a distinguisher such as "another" to mark the fact that the second word "Messiah" has a different referent. Otherwise the same referent is expected.

It may be objected that the word "Messiah" in this passage is without the definite article and so refers to an indefinite person rather than to the well known Messiah of Jewish tradition. However, it is likely that the word is used here as a proper name that requires no article. That makes it even more evident that both occurrences of the word have the same referent.

A translation should be in harmony with reality, that is, it is expected to correspond with actual history. The advocates of the alternate punctuation should be able to identify the Prince Messiah that came on the scene after forty-nine years; they should be able to explain why the city and the Temple were not rebuilt until the era of the sixty-two weeks, and who the new Messiah was who appeared after the sixty-two weeks. This should not be too difficult, because such advocates usually post-date the Book of Daniel, so the author himself should have known who they were. Lippard did not address these problems, probably because those of his anti-supernatural persuasion do not expect Scripture to be historically accurate anyway. The "messiahs" that I have seen proposed by advocates of the alternate punctuation have not appeared very "messianic" to me, indeed they are rather flimsy excuses for rejecting the Christian translation and interpretation, which at least correspond with history and have a real Messiah. Finally, it is appropriate to keep the traditional punctuation because the rabbinic literature relates this passage to the time of the destruction of the second Temple,¹³ just subsequent to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ by forty years (the mystical number of prophecy).

MINISTRY PROPHECIES

In this section Lippard critiques three different prophecies related to the ministry of Jesus: (1) the prophecies of a forerunner (John the Baptist); (2) the prophecy of a ministry in Galilee; (3) the prophecy of Messiah's names; and (4) the prophecy of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The Forerunner Prophecies

Lippard discussed two prominent passages that are regarded by Christians as prophecies relating to John the Baptist as forerunner of the Messiah: (1) Isaiah 40:3, which Lippard asserts does not relate to a messenger for the Messiah; (2) and Malachi 3:1 which Lippard denies was fulfilled by John the Baptist.

Isaiah 40:3

This passage reads:

¹³ In Naz. 32b it is noted that Daniel 9:24 refers to the time when the second Temple was to be destroyed. There is a similar note in Yalkut, vol. ii, p. 79d.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make straight in the desert
A highway for our God."

Regarding this passage, Lippard stated: "This verse speaks not of a messenger for the Messiah, but of the Jews being released from captivity." This is a strange interpretation of a passage that mentions nothing of captives or of Babylon. Instead, it mentions the way of the LORD, and of a highway for our God. The text goes on to read:

"Every valley shall be exalted
And every mountain and hill brought low;
The crooked places shall be made straight
And the rough places smooth;
The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together;
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

The text is obviously speaking figuratively of the preparation for the coming of the LORD, not captives. Lippard ignored the fact that this passage was viewed Messianically in the early rabbinical literature.¹⁴ This is confirmed by the LXX translation of this passage that rendered verse 5 as "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God." (cf. Luke 3:6). Also the Aramaic Targum translates verse 9 as "Say to the cities of the House of Judah, the Kingdom of your God shall be manifested." These ancient Jewish translations clearly indicate that the Jewish translators understood that the prophet was looking beyond any future restoration of captives to the Messianic era of the Kingdom of God.

This Messianic expectation of the early Jews was made clear when John the Baptist identified his ministry with this passage: Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" He said: "I am "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the LORD,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. (John 1:22-23)

The priests and Levites who interviewed John understood the Messianic application of this passage; and they understood the implication of John's basic message: "Repent for the kingdom of the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Obviously John regarded his ministry as preparing the way for the Messiah; and John regarded his ministry as basically fulfilled when he officially identified Jesus as the Messiah:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is

¹⁴ This passage is applied Messianically in the Midrash on Lamentations 1:2. Also in Vayyikra R. 1, and in Yalkut ii, 77.

preferred before me, for He was before me. I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." (John 1:29-34)

So, regardless of Lippard's objection, if Jesus was the Messiah, and we have many reasons to believe so, then John did what this passage depicts: he prepared the way of the Lord, Jesus Christ, the Messiah; he fulfilled the prophecy.

Malachi 3:1

This passage reads:

"Behold, I send My messenger,
And he will prepare the way before Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.

Regarding this passage, Lippard stated: "This may be plausibly taken as a messianic prophecy.¹⁵ But did John actually 'clear the way' as a messenger for Jesus? The historian Flavius Josephus writes about John the Baptist, but makes no link of his name with that of Jesus." Here Lippard, in his usual shallow scholarship, argues from silence. Josephus did write much about John, but again his history was not exhaustive, but was focused on his own political and literary objectives, which, as I mentioned earlier, had little interest in Messianic prophecy. By making such a statement, Lippard implied that the Gospel records are unreliable and contradictory history. However, the Gospel of John, the last of the Gospels, is complementary to the Synoptics, not contradictory of them. The Synoptics clearly present John the Baptist as preparing the way for Jesus and identifying Him as the promised Messiah at the time of His baptism. The Gospel of John made his identification of Jesus more specific. The Gospel of John had no need to repeat John's depressed condition in prison when he sent some of his disciples to question Jesus. He was surely seeking for some assurance that he would be delivered from prison. There is no logical reason to regard these reliable historic records as contradictory. Lippard has allowed his skeptical rationalization to imagine contradictions where none exist.

Isaiah 9:1-2--the Galilean Ministry

This passage reads:

¹⁵ Mal. 3:1 is applied to Elijah as forerunner of the Messiah in Pirke de R. Elizer. c 29. John the Baptist denied being Elijah, but Jesus declared that John fulfilled the expectation of the coming of Elijah (Matt 11:14; 17:10-13; Mark 9:12-13) which Luke explained as being in "the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17).

Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed,
 As when at first He lightly esteemed
 The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
 And afterward more heavily oppressed her,
 By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,
 In Galilee of the Gentiles.
 The people who walked in darkness
 Have seen a great light;
 Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
 Upon them a light has shined.

Concerning this passage, Lippard stated: "All this verse says is that God will make the area 'glorious'--it says nothing of ministry by the Messiah." Again Lippard has ignored ancient Jewish tradition which relates this passage to Messianic times and saw a figurative connection between light and the ministry of the Messiah.¹⁶ This is another example of where Matthew saw as figurative "fulfillment" of this passage in the glorious light of the ministry of Jesus in that area.

Isaiah 9:6-7--The Names and Ministry of Messiah

This passage reads:

For unto us a Child is born,
 Unto us a Son is given;
 And the government will be upon His shoulder.
 And His name will be called
 Wonderful, Counselor,
 Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father,
 Prince of Peace.
 Of the increase of His government and peace
 There will be no end,
 Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
 To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
 From that time forward, even forever.
 The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Concerning this passage, Lippard stated: "Jewish tradition says that this refers to King Hezekiah, not the Messiah (Sigal 1981, pp. 29-32). Isaiah 9:7, if applied to Jesus, is unfulfilled since it speaks of his kingship." However, Lippard is incorrect because this passage is clearly

¹⁶ This passage is Messianic by association with verses 6 and 7, part of the same prophecy; see the next note. The expression in Psa 36:9 "In Thy light shall we see light" is applied to the Messiah in Yalkut on Isaiah 60 (vol. 11, p. 56c). Pesikta Rabbita 36 associates the Messiah with light, stating that when Messiah appears God "will brighten the light of the King Messiah and of Israel, whilst all the nations of the earth will be in darkness--in gross darkness--and they shall walk, all of them, by the light of the Messiah and Israel, as it is said And nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising (Isa. 60:3)."

regarded as Messianic in the ancient pre-Christian Jewish literature and the Talmudic literature.¹⁷ So, whatever Jewish tradition Sigal referred to must be from a different source derived from post-Christian times. Obviously this passage cannot literally refer to King Hezekiah because his kingdom did come to an end and titles of deity were never applied to him. Such titles were reserved for the Messiah. It is true that this passage is not cited in the New Testament as a Messianic prophecy fulfilled by Jesus. But on the other hand, this passage is alluded to in the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:32-33).

Titles of deity were applied to Jesus: "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13; see also 2 Peter 1:1); "But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'" (Heb 1:8); "God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim 3:16); "the Word was God" (John 1:1). It is true that the exact titles found in Isaiah 9:6 are not applied to Jesus, yet each of them is alluded to in some sense in the life and ministry of Jesus. Lippard's illogical and unreasonable references to Jesus not being a king have been previously answered, and no further comment needs to be made here. So there is no reason to doubt that certain aspects of this prophecy have been fulfilled by Jesus, and the future aspects will be fulfilled by Him.

Isaiah 32:3-4; 35:6-7--Miraculous Healings

These passages read:

The eyes of those who see will not be dim,
And the ears of those who hear will listen.
Also the heart of the rash will understand knowledge,
And the tongue of the stammerers will be ready to speak plainly.
(Isa 32:3-4)

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness,
And streams in the desert.
The parched ground shall become a pool,
And the thirsty land springs of water;
In the habitation of jackals, where each lay,
There shall be grass with reeds and rushes.
(Isa 35:5-7)

¹⁷ Isa 9:6 is expressly applied to the Messiah in Targum Jonathan which reads, "And his name was called from of old, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, He who lives forever, the Messiah, in whose days peace shall increase upon us." Also there is a very curious comment in Debarim R. 1 in connection with a Haggadic discussion of Gen 43:14, which, however fanciful, makes a Messianic application of this passage--also in Bemidbar R. 11.

Regarding Isaiah 32:3-4, Lippard declared that this passage "does not speak of healing." He is right. This passage is not cited in the New Testament in connection with Messianic prophecy, and there seems to be no mention of this passage in the ancient Jewish Messianic traditions. Some Christians may have been over zealous in citing this passage as a Messianic prophecy, but this one is likely not so.

Regarding Isaiah 35:5-7, Lippard admits that this passage "describes people being healed . . . but also, in verses 7-8, describes land being 'healed.' There is no clear indication here that these healings have anything to do with the Messiah, rather, it is God himself doing the healing. The Gospels contain no account of Jesus healing land." It is true that the context attributes the healing mentioned in this passage to God. However, ancient Jewish tradition repeatedly applies verses 5 and 6 to Messianic times.¹⁸ This implies that God would do the healing through the Messiah. Although not quoting this passage directly, Jesus Himself alluded to this passage when he recited His miraculous healings as evidence to John the Baptist that He was the Messiah (Matt 11:5; Luke 7:22). However, Jesus never alluded to the healing of the land; He taught that such land restoration would be part of the future Messianic Kingdom. Christians do not claim that such land restoration was fulfilled by Jesus. Like his illogical and unreasonable denial of Jesus' future kingdom, Lippard also denies the blessings of the future Messianic Kingdom. As in the other instances of this shallow scholarship, there is no reason to reject the fulfillment of the aspect of this prophecy relating to the healing of people just because those aspects of the prophecy relating to the future have not yet been fulfilled.

Zechariah 9:9--Triumphal Entry Prophecy

This passage reads:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you;
He is just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey.

Concerning this passage, Lippard stated: "Jesus was not a king, so that aspect of the prophecy remains unfulfilled." This passage was frequently related to Messianic times in the early Jewish literature.¹⁹ Many Christian theologians regard this triumphal entry into Jerusalem as a genuine

¹⁸ Thus in Yalkut 1. 78c, and 157a; in Ber. R. 95; also the Midrash on Psa 146:8 reads: "In the days-to-come [i.e., the Messianic age], however, The eyes of the blind shall be opened (ibid. [Isaiah] 35:5)."

¹⁹ Thus in the Talmudic discussion of Daniel 7:13 (Sanh. 98a) it is said that if Israel behaved worthily, the Messiah would come in the clouds of heaven; if otherwise, humble, and riding on an ass. There were many traditions about this ass on which Messiah is to ride; and so firm was the belief in it, that, according to the Talmud, "if anyone saw an ass in his dreams, he will see salvation" (Ber. 56b). This verse is also quoted Messianically in Pirque de R. Eliz. c.31, and in several Midrashim.

offer of the kingdom by Jesus. This offer was clearly understood by the people who greeted His entry. Luke recorded their greeting of Him in these terms: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Luke 19:38); Mark recorded it as "Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord" (Mark 11:10); and John recorded it as "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel" (John 12:13). Jesus, of course, knew that this offer of the kingdom would be rejected and that He must first die for the sins of the world, but He nevertheless answered Pilate's question in the affirmative when he asked "Are You the King of the Jews?" (Matt 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 18:37). Furthermore, Pilate mockingly presented Jesus to the Jews with the words "Behold your King" (John 19:14); and the superscription on His cross was: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (John 19:19). So, although Jesus never functioned as king during His ministry, it is clear that He presented Himself as a king at this time, and that when He comes again it will be as king. So this passage truly was fulfilled by Jesus.

Lippard's remark that Matthew misunderstood this passage is inaccurate. Matthew translated the Hebrew text very literally into Greek, but the Greek text need not be understood as a contradiction anymore than the Hebrew text. The problem is that of the English translators who translated the Greek text overly literal. Most of the modern translations render the passage more accurately and do not reflect any problem. Perhaps Lippard does not know Hebrew and Greek well enough to understand these important details.

BETRAYAL PROPHECIES

Lippard cited three passages that are related to the betrayal of Jesus: (1) Psalm 41:9; (2) Psalm 55:12-14; and (3) Zechariah 11:12-13. Lippard denies that these passages are Messianic prophecies.

Psalm 41:9

This passage reads:

Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me.

Lippard is right that this passage does not directly predict the betrayal of the Messiah. This passage portrays the heartbreak of the Psalmist David over his betrayal by a trusted friend. Jesus alluded to this passage as being fulfilled in Judas' betrayal of Him (John 13:18). However, Jesus must have used the term "fulfilled" in its figurative sense, marking a significant parallel between David's betrayal and His own betrayal. As the Messianic Son of David, Jesus must have felt a close affinity to many events in David's life. Most Christians understand this passage as a "figurative" fulfillment, although in their zeal they may speak of it as literal. Such a figurative fulfillment does not need to be exact in every detail—the betrayal is the significant point. Lippard's shallow scholarship refuses to recognize such figurative fulfillments; he demands exact literal fulfillment or nothing. But there is no reason to deny such figurative fulfillment here.

Psalm 55:12-14

This passage reads:

For it is not an enemy who reproaches me;
Then I could bear it.
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me;
Then I could hide from him.
But it was you, a man my equal,
My companion and my acquaintance.
We took sweet counsel together,
And walked to the house of God in the throng.

Concerning this passage Lippard is right. This passage, like the one above, does not predict the betrayal of the Messiah, but is a lament of King David, again over his betrayal by a friend. However, unlike Psalm 41:9, this passage is not cited in the New Testament as being fulfilled; and it is not cited in ancient Jewish literature as Messianic. Christians have noted the similarity of the two passages, and in their zeal have assumed that both were Messianic, and both fulfilled. This passage can legitimately be excluded from the list of verifiable Messianic prophecies.

Zechariah 11:12-13

This passage reads:

Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"--that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.

Lippard again denies that this passage is Messianic and related to the betrayal of Jesus. He asserted: "The prophet Zechariah is speaking about himself and no betrayal was involved." Again "This is Zechariah speaking of his own experience rather than a messianic prophecy. But Matthew 27:5-7 tries to fulfill this non-prophecy by telling a story of Judas Iscariot . . ." Lippard is right that this passage does not directly predict the betrayal of the Messiah, and is indeed an account of an event in Zechariah's life. However, He is wrong that no betrayal was involved. In his later years, Zechariah was rejected by the people of his day. When he challenged them to give him the wages due him as a prophet, they gave him instead the price of a slave (30 pieces of silver). This surely was a betrayal. So the LORD told the prophet to throw it to the potter.

Lippard is also wrong about this passage being Messianic. The ancient Jewish literature refers this passage to the Messiah. It does not make specific mention of the betrayal, but rather of the 30 pieces of silver.²⁰ Matthew referred to this passage as being fulfilled in Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Again, Matthew used the term "fulfilled" in its figurative sense. There was a significant

²⁰ Zech. 11:12 is Messianically explained in Ber. R. 98, but with this remark, that the 30 pieces of silver apply to 30 precepts, which Messiah will give to Israel.

parallel between the betrayal of Zechariah by his people and the betrayal of Jesus by His disciple, particularly regarding the common detail of the 30 pieces of silver and the potter. Such a figurative fulfillment cannot be denied.

Lippard noted another problem with this passage, namely that Matthew attributed this passage to the prophet Jeremiah rather than Zechariah. This seems to be an example of a possible error in the Scripture. Lippard, in his shallow scholarship and anti-supernatural bias, delighted in an opportunity to discredit the Scripture. This problem has been known and addressed from antiquity. Numerous solutions have been proposed, but the most satisfactory one is that presented by Archer which Lippard did not accurately represent. Archer, following many earlier Christian scholars, indicated that there are numerous common elements in Jeremiah 18:2 and 19:2 with those of Zechariah 11:13; that Matthew saw in the combined elements of Jeremiah and Zechariah a "figurative" fulfillment in the story of the 30 pieces of silver and the potter's field; and that Matthew attributed the ideas to Jeremiah who was the more ancient and more prominent of the two prophets, even though the greater portions of the details came from Zechariah. This practice of attributing to one author material from more than one source is well known in the Bible, and is not regarded as erroneous. For example, it is common to refer to David as the source of the Book of Psalms, even though numerous of the psalms were written by others. Mark referred to Isaiah as the source of a compound prophecy, even though part came from Isaiah, the more ancient and more prominent prophet, and part came from Malachi (see Mark 1:2-3; cf. Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1). The Books of Kings are usually attributed to a late author even though much of the material came from ancient documents, books, and court records. The same is true of the Books of the Chronicles. So this incident is a "problem" only for those with an anti-supernatural bias who thrive on surface difficulties.

Finally, Lippard postulated that Acts 1:18-19 provides an alternate and contradictory account of the 30 pieces of silver and the potter's field. But the Acts story discusses the Field of Blood not the Potter's Field-- obviously two different fields--and the "wages of iniquity" was not the 30 pieces of silver, but the money Judas stole as treasurer from the funds of Jesus and the disciples. Thus Acts describes a different event in the life of Judas, and is not a contradiction. Lippard also implied that the word "potter" really should be translated "treasury" based on the Syriac translation. But no textual decisions should be made on the basis of a single ancient version, especially when all the Hebrew manuscripts and other ancient versions agree. The word in Jeremiah cannot be understood other than "potter" and is the same as the word in Zechariah. The rendering of the RSV is not convincing; because the RSV frequently emends the Hebrew text at the whim of its translators on such flimsy evidence as this.

CRUCIFIXION PROPHECIES

Lippard endeavored to disprove that numerous passages are related prophetically to the crucifixion of Jesus: (1) Psalm 22:16 regarding the piercing of Messiah's hands and feet; (2) Zechariah 12:10 regarding the piercing of Messiah; (3) Zechariah 13:6 regarding the wounds in

Messiah's hands; (4) Psa 22:18 regarding the dividing of Messiah's garments; (5) Psa 69:²¹ regarding giving Jesus wine mixed with myrrh; (6) Psa 22:1 regarding one of Jesus' last statements; (7) Psa 34:20 regarding Messiah's bones not being broken. Lippard's main line of argument continues to be that these passages are not Messianic prophecies and that they were not fulfilled by Jesus.

Psalm 22:16

This passage reads:

For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet.

Regarding this passage, Lippard declared: "This is a psalm of David which gives no indication of being prophetic and which describes the speaker being hunted down and killed rather than being crucified." This explanation is almost as amazing as a Messianic prophecy--a man describing his own murder! It is true that the psalm never directly speaks of the Messiah, and the first strophes of the psalm are not worded as a prophecy. However, the latter strophes (vss. 22-31) are worded as prophecy that relates to the future Kingdom of God. So for example:

All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom is the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations. (Psa 22:27-28)

Also the ancient Jewish literature relates certain portions of this psalm to the Messiah.²¹ So it is not as though this psalm lacks prophecy and Messianic application. In fact, there are so many parallels between David's experiences in this psalm and that of the crucifixion of Jesus that most Christians regard the whole psalm to be Messianic in spite of any direct reference to the Messiah. This is done because certain details in this psalm could not be literally true of David (such as describing his own murder--he died naturally, and his hands and feet were not pierced), but they could be prophetically true of the Messiah. In the worst case this psalm should qualify as another instance of a "figurative" prophecy. It is only in this latter sense that this verse can be regarded as fulfilled by Jesus, because the New Testament does not actually cite this passage as fulfilled in the crucifixion of Jesus--only allusions are made, such as in John 20:25-27. Nevertheless, the parallel is so striking that it is scarcely a coincidence; so this passage should not be rejected as a "figuratively" fulfilled by Jesus.

²¹ On Psa. 22:7 a remarkable comment appears in Yalkut on Isa. 60, applying this passage to the Messiah (the second, or son of Ephraim), and using almost the same words in which the Evangelists describe the mocking behavior of the Jews at the cross. Also of Psa. 22:15 there is a similarly remarkable application to the Messiah of this verse in Yalkut.

Lippard called attention to the question about the word translated "pierced." Some, such as Sigal, point out that the Hebrew word is "ka'ariy" which could mean "like a lion." But such a rendering makes little sense in this context without a good deal of speculative interpretation, as indicated by the words Sigal had to add to the text. It is true that the printed Hebrew text known as the Masoretic text has the word "ka'ariy," but other Hebrew manuscripts and printed editions of the Hebrew Bible have the word "ka'aru" or "karu" which mean "they pierced." This latter reading is preferred by most translators and lexicographers,²² because it makes much better sense, and is supported by the pre-Christian Jewish translators of the LXX, and the translators of the Syriac version, as well as Hebrew manuscripts. It appears likely that the Masoretic Text was altered as a result of early debates with the Christians.

Sigal gave the impression that the presence of the Aleph in the word "ka'aru" prevented it from being derived from a Hebrew root which has no Aleph. But the words "ka'aru" and "karu" being variant forms of the same verb (as explained by the lexicographers) is demonstrated by the following Hebrew words that have the same kind of middle Aleph and the same kind of relationship: bo'r, bor (pit, cistern) from the verb bur (dig); da'g, dag (fish) from the verb dug (fish for); la't, lat (secrecy) from the verb lut (be secret); m'um, mum (blemish); n'od, nod (skin); q'am, qam (he arose); ra'sh, rash (poor) from the verb rush (be poor); sh'at (contempt) from the verb shut (treat with contempt); also in Aramaic, da'er (dweller) from the verb dur (dwell); and qa'em (riser) from the verb qum (he arose). These examples are sufficient to demonstrate that a middle Aleph frequently occurs in words and forms derived from middle Waw verbs as in this passage. His argument is convincing only to those who know little or nothing about Hebrew.

Zechariah 12:10

This text reads:

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

Concerning this passage, Lippard declared: "there is no indication that this speaks of crucifixion. Furthermore, the 'him' being mourned is not the 'me' that is being pierced." While it is true that the word "crucifixion" is not used in this passage, the Hebrew word "daqaru" translated here as "pierced" is a word used at times for the execution of capital punishment, so of idolaters (Num 25:8) and of false prophets (Zech 13:3)--the kind of piercing Jesus experienced in His hands, feet, and side when He was crucified.

Lippard cleverly avoided the most important question of this text: Who is the "Me" who was pierced in this text? He is none other than the speaker, the LORD, as the context clearly indicates (see 12:1, 4). Furthermore, the "Him" who is being mourned is also the LORD--it is not

²² So F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew And English Lexicon Of The Old Testament* (Oxford, 1955), p. 468. These lexicographers are not known for their conservative theology, so their support of this reading is significant.

unusual for the LORD to refer to Himself in the third person as in verses 7, 8, and 9. But how could the LORD Himself be put to death by piercing and be mourned by the righteous of Israel? The Hebrew text says it was the LORD, but sound reason dictates that this reference to the LORD must be in the person of the Messiah. Although Sigal claims that the Jewish interpretation of this passage refers this piercing to the suffering of the Jewish people, the ancient Jewish tradition relates this passage to the Messiah.²³

But how could the righteous people of Israel look on the Messiah whom they had pierced and mourn for Him unless they had actually put the Messiah to death by piercing some time in the past? So, this passage refers to the second coming of the Messiah. Some time in the future, when Jesus returns as the Son of Man to receive His kingdom from the Ancient of Days, the people of Israel will recognize their Messiah as the One whom they put to death. They will also recognize Him as the LORD, a clear implication of the deity of the Messiah. Lippard, in his usual shallow scholarship, has failed to address these important considerations.

Zechariah 13:6

This passage reads:

And one shall say to him, "What are these wounds in thine hands?" Then he shall answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Lippard correctly indicated that this passage should be translated "What are these wounds between your arms?" The context of this passage indicates that this verse relates to a false prophet, not to the Messiah. This passage is not cited in the New Testament, and many Christian scholars do not regard this passage as Messianic. Some Christians, in their zeal, have seen what they thought was a parallel to that of 12:10 and erroneously concluded that this passage also is Messianic.

Psalms 22:18

This passage reads: "They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."

Concerning this passage, Lippard denied that it is a prophecy, and he asserted: "This verse tells of one event--clothing being divided by the casting of lots. But John transforms it into two events: first the division of Jesus' clothing apart from his tunic (John 19:23) and then casting of lots for his tunic (John 19:24)." Of course, I have already answered the matter of this being a Messianic prophecy in the discussion above under Psalm 22:16. In addition, John, following the

²³ This passage is applied to the Messiah the Son of Joseph in the Talmud (Sukk. 52a) which reads: "What is the cause of the mourning? R. Dosa and the Rabbis differ on the point. One explained, The cause is the slaying of Messiah the son of Joseph, and the other explained, The cause is the slaying of the Evil Inclination." In the same section, on Zech 12:10 it reads: "It is well according to him who explains that the cause is the slaying of Messiah the son of Joseph, since that well agrees with the Scripture verse, And they shall look on me because they have pierced him through . . ."

pre-Christian Jewish translators of the LXX, who in turn accurately followed the Hebrew text, distinguished the plural "garments" (Hebrew "begadim"; Greek "ta himatia") of the first line from the singular "clothing" (Hebrew "labush"; Greek "ton himatismos"; KJV "vesture") of the second line. In Hebrew poetry, as in this passage, the second line is not merely a redundant repetition of the first, but often adds a new detail. Lippard's shallow scholarship fails to take these things into consideration, either because he does not know Hebrew and Greek, or he is uncritically following the shallow scholarship of Sigal.

Psalm 69:21

This passage reads:

They also gave me gall for my food,
And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Concerning this passage, Lippard denied that it is a prophecy, and he declared: "This psalm, which speaks repeatedly of flood waters, gives no indication of being either prophetic or of applying to Jesus." Lippard is correct that this psalm does not mention the Messiah, and that it does not appear to be a prophecy. It is another lament of David over his own troubles. Likewise, the psalm is not applied to the Messiah in the ancient Jewish literature. Christians have seen numerous parallels between events in the life of David and similar events in the life of the Messiah, the Son of David. This is another example of a "figurative" fulfillment in which the details are similar but not exactly the same. Such figurative fulfillments need not be denied, as I have discussed in more detail earlier.

Psalm 22:1

This passage reads:

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
Why are You so far from helping Me,
And from the words of My groaning?

Concerning this passage, Lippard stated: "It is hardly miraculous that Jesus would make such a statement. Presumably Jesus was familiar with the Hebrew scriptures. Such a remark, however, is inconsistent with Christian theology. Why would Jesus, supposed to be God incarnate, speak of being forsaken by himself at all, let alone at the culmination of his plan for human salvation? It is not apparent that Psalms 22 is either prophetic or applicable to Jesus." I have already discussed the fact that Psalm 22 is Messianic, prophetic, and applicable to Jesus. It is true that Jesus was familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, although His quotation of this passage on the cross was in His mother tongue from the Aramaic Targum. It may not be miraculous for Him to recite Scripture while He was dying, but it certainly was a fulfillment of this prophetic passage, even if it may have been self fulfilling.

I am surprised that Lippard, in spite of his shallow scholarship, would make such a ridiculous statement about Christian theology. Either he is ignorant of Christian theology, he is ridiculing Christian theology, or he is trying deliberately to mislead his uninformed readers. In

either case, he misrepresented Christian theology, which is unbecoming good scholarship. Christian theology clearly distinguishes between the three persons of the triune Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit--one God in three persons. God the Father could and did forsake God the Son while the Son was bearing the sin and guilt of mankind in His body on the cross. That act was a significant part of the culmination of God's plan for human salvation. That act may transcend human understanding, but it is what Scripture records.

Psalm 34:20

This passage reads: " He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken."

Concerning this passage, Lippard declares that "There is no indication that Psalms 34 is intended as prophetic, nor that it applies to Jesus." Lippard may be right about this passage. The psalm is primarily a psalm of praise to the Lord for his deliverance, although the latter part of the psalm, of which this verse is a part, is a prediction of God's continued protection. This psalm is not applied to the Messiah in the ancient Jewish literature. It is likely that the Apostle John was not citing this psalm but rather Exodus 12:46 which reads "Nor shall you break one of its bones," referring to the paschal lamb. Christians see a parallel between Psalm 34:20 and Exodus 12:46, and so in their zeal often cite the Psalm in addition to Exodus as the fulfilled passage. In this instance, John did not cite the passage as a Messianic prophecy, but as a Mosaic requirement for the paschal lamb, of which Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment. As the fulfillment of the paschal lamb, the bones of Jesus must not be broken.

Lippard reacted to Jesus as the paschal lamb as follows: "This analogy fails for several reasons: the paschal lamb was not for the atonement of sin, and Jewish sacrifices were required to be completely without blemish, sore, or injury (Leviticus 22:20-25) while Jesus was scourged and mutilated." It is true that Jesus is directly associated with the paschal lamb; the Apostle Paul wrote "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7). It also true that the paschal lamb was not associated with atonement of sin, but the lamb was slain and its blood was shed and applied to the door posts, and without the blood the death angel would not pass over the house. The death of the paschal lamb was associated with Israel's redemption from bondage to slavery in Egypt. The death of Jesus Christ is associated with redemption from bondage to sin. However, after the first Passover in Egypt, the regular observance of the Passover included the offering of a sin offering as well (Numbers 28:16-25). So the atonement of sin was associated with the Passover.

While the Apostle John did associate Jesus with the paschal lamb, he also associated Him with all the sacrifices of Israel. Christian theology understands that the sacrifice of Jesus fulfilled all the Levitical sacrifices. So John referred to Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Lippard supposes that Jesus failed to meet the requirements for a sacrifice because He was scourged and mutilated. But Jesus was physically and spiritually spotless when the sacrifice began. The scourging and mutilation were part of the whole execution process by which he became the sacrifice. The Levitical sacrifices were no longer without blemish once the priest's knife cut its throat, flayed its skin, and dismembered its body.

So Jesus was no longer spotless once the sacrificial process began. Lippard is grasping at straws to bring up such pointless objections.

CONCLUSIONS

Lippard concluded by saying, "This examination shows that none stands up as a specific, detailed, and accurate prediction of an event which came to occur in the life of Jesus. Instead, the purported prophecies appear to be the result of deliberate attempts by the gospel writers and Christian apologists to find post hoc similarities between events described in the New Testament and the Hebrew scriptures. Messianic prophecies, contrary to apologists, do not provide evidence for Christian faith."

I have shown that Lippard's allegations are unfounded. The Gospel writers did not attempt to find post hoc similarities, but made reference to well known Messianic prophecies and expectations current among the Jews of their days. I documented these Messianic expectations from the ancient Jewish literature—they are not imaginary. Many of these could not have been self fulfilled by Jesus or His disciples. In his capacity as a man, He had no control over His conception, His place of birth, or His homeland. While He could have controlled some of the details of His public ministry, His pious character and godly reputation discount the possibility of such fraudulent behavior. He had no control over the time or manner of His death or the details of His crucifixion. It is mere speculation to arbitrarily accuse the Gospel writers of fabricating the details of Jesus' life to make them fit the known Messianic expectations of the day. The Gospels give good evidence of being accurate history. Their accounts are sufficiently similar to discount actual contradiction, and they are sufficiently diverse to discount the possibility of collusion. Their testimony has stood the test of centuries of cross examining. Only critics of the Bible who share Lippard's anti-supernatural bias dare to conclude otherwise.

Admittedly some of the passages Lippard discussed were not direct predictions regarding the Messiah, but were striking similarities to events in the life of Jesus or to other passages in the Old Testament that were indeed Messianic predictions or expectations. Such passages were fulfilled in a "figurative" not a literal fashion. But such "figurative" fulfillment should not be discounted. Admittedly, a few of the passages are not really Messianic prophecies or expectations, but the results of overly active zeal of some Christians. But this should not discredit the many valid fulfilled prophecies.

What is surprising is the prophecies that Lippard failed to discuss. He stated that he discussed the most important ones, but the most important ones relate to Jesus' resurrection. The Old Testament does foretell the resurrection of the Messiah, and God really did raise Jesus from the dead. This event validates the righteous character of Jesus, the truth of His Messianic claims, the truth of fulfilled Messianic prophecy, and the validity of Christianity.

This is not just the claim of a Christian believer. The validity of the resurrection is acknowledged by competent Jewish scholars. Pinchas Lapide, an Orthodox Jew who is a New Testament theologian and former associate professor at the American College in Jerusalem,

wrote a book entitled *The Resurrection Of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*.²⁴ The book records his respect for Jesus: "I accept Jesus as a believing Jew who had a central role to play in God's plan of salvation and in whose name a worldwide church was founded" (p. 11). Again he stated, "I accept the resurrection of Easter Sunday not as an invention of the community of disciples, but as a historic event" (p. 15). His book explains his thesis of the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus; it is a scholarly document that is not ignorant of all the critical questions raised by skeptical scholars. Unfortunately Lapide does not accept Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews, but he does see Him as the Messiah of the Gentiles.

Lapide asserted that Judaism in the days of Jesus was not expecting the resurrection of the Messiah (p. 152), however, the preaching of the Apostles argued for this expectation, and for the fulfillment of this expectation by Jesus' resurrection. Thousands of Jews, including many priests, believed the Apostles and accepted Jesus as their Messiah. The arguments of the Apostles are convincing, and Jews and Gentiles today should believe their message and accept Jesus as the Messiah not only of the Gentiles, as Lapide did, but also of the Jews, as many Jews now believe.

***A Message to Mr. Lippard
And Other Critics of Messianic prophecy:***

You think that you are free and capable of independent thinking, but you have enslaved your mind by a presupposition of unbelief--denying the possibility of an inspired Scripture and of a holy God who holds you responsible for your sin and unbelief. You think you are reasoning soundly, but the above article is evidence that you are merely rationalizing your unbelief. Sound reason follows the laws of logic, does not twist or misrepresent evidence, tells the whole truth, and is honest about the results. It is time for you to be honest with yourselves and God. There is valid evidence for Messianic prophecy and that the real prophecies of His first coming were fulfilled by Jesus. This gives strong reason to expect that those prophecies that relate to the future Messianic Kingdom will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again as the Son of Man. God loves you and wants to forgive your sin and unbelief. Why not stop rebelling against God, repent of your sin and unbelief, accept Jesus Christ as your Messiah and Savior, and begin a new life in which you are truly free to know the truth. I trust and pray that you will.

Sincerely,
James D. Price

²⁴ Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection Of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983).