**The Story of the Church of Christ**

**IV. The Messiah -- Jesus Christ**

The history of Israel is a long story of this people refusing to obey God. Time after time God would reveal His will to the prophets who would warn the people of their sins. Sometimes the people would return to God, but soon they would repeat the same sins -- often worshipping the false gods of neighboring people. Leaving God’s teaching was called apostasy.

By the time Jesus was born the Jews, as Israel had come to be called, were in the middle of another apostasy. They had been captives for hundreds of years. They paid money to their Roman overseers. For four hundred years there had not been a prophet in Israel.

The people hoped the Messiah would come to help them. The word Messiah meant a man who had been anointed with holy oil, such as the kings of Israel. In the New Testament the word Messiah applies to Jesus Christ.

Many prophesies in the Old Testament told where Christ would be born, where He would later live, and many other details of His life. In the book of Psalms we find mention of Him in Psalm 2, 16, 22, 40 and 110. Read these psalms which tell of His glory and also of what He would suffer for mankind. The word Messiah (Messias) is found in the New Testament in the Gospel of John 1:41 and 4:25.

Someone who would come before the Messiah is also mentioned in prophesy. This was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist who was actually the cousin of Jesus.

As Christians we are familiar with the stories of the birth and early years of the life of Jesus. We know an angel appeared to Mary and told her the baby she would bear would be the Son of God. This was confirmed to Joseph also. When the infant Jesus was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem to be blessed, both an old man named Simeon and a righteous woman named Anna testified the child would become the Savior of Israel. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist testified before His birth that Mary’s child would be the Lord.

A story about the early years of His life involves the visit of Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem when He was only twelve years old. There Jesus found teachers who knew much about the religion of the Jews. God had given Jesus great understanding, and the teachers were amazed that a young boy should have such knowledge and wisdom. When Mary and Joseph, who had been looking for Him, asked what He was doing in the Temple with the

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teachers, Jesus asked them if they did not know He must be about His Father’s business.

Jesus returned home with Mary and Joseph where he stayed until he was 30 years old, the age when a boy was considered a man. Through these years Jesus had continue to grow in grace before God and man.

Meanwhile John, the cousin of Jesus was preaching and baptizing people in the river Jordan. He told them he baptized them with water “unto repentance”, but a mightier one than he was coming who would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and fire. Then Jesus came to the river Jordan and asked John to baptize Him. John didn’t think he was worthy to baptize Jesus. Jesus told John it was necessary for Him to be baptized to “fulfill all righteous”. After Jesus was baptized and came up out of the water, the heavens were opened. The Spirit of God came down like a dove and lighted on Him. A voice from Heaven said “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased”.