

When I was a kid, I loved looking through kaleidoscopes. You put your eye next to the opening, and every time you make a turn, you see new colors, new lights, new designs, new beauty. In many ways, that's what God wants our experience to be like when we look at the Bible—every time we look at it, for us to see light refracted in a new way, with new beauty and wonder on every page. When I started taking my study and reading of the Bible more seriously, one of the ways I came to discover the Bible is like a kaleidoscope is all the ways I came to see Jesus throughout Scripture. When I first started reading the Bible, I discovered Jesus in the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—that are about his life. But as I started reading the Old Testament more closely, like turning a kaleidoscope, I began to see the splendor and beauty of Jesus on nearly every page.

Today, we are wrapping up our 21-week long study of the book of Genesis, and I want to show you one of the clearest ways we see Jesus in Genesis, through a very specific prophecy. Then I want to turn the kaleidoscope and look at Jesus from many different angles. Perhaps the most obvious and straight forward way we see Jesus in Genesis is toward the very end, in chapter 49. Jacob speaks a blessing over each of his sons, and this is what he said to his son Judah: “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his” (Genesis 49:10). What is this prophecy, spoken 2,000 years before the first Christmas, telling us? That from the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel, a king would arise to rule God’s people, and *the scepter* and *the ruler’s staff* would stay in the tribe of Judah until he to whom it belongs came. That’s a promise about the ultimate king, the final king—Jesus Christ. When he comes, the obedience of the nations shall be his. Jesus won’t just be the king of the Jewish people; he’ll be the king of all people! Everyone everywhere will bow down before him. It’s the promise of Christmas, all the way back in the book of Genesis.

That’s a prophecy about Jesus from Genesis 49. Now we’ll turn the kaleidoscope and see 21 ways Genesis anticipates Jesus. The goal is not to read Jesus *into* Genesis—but watch Jesus *emerge from* Genesis. Reading the Scriptures like this is like panning a river for gold and finding treasure in every scoop. Studying for this sermon has helped my heart prepare for Christmas, and I hope it enriches your heart, too. We’re going to move fast. Don’t try to write everything down. Instead, let your heart notice the pattern: God has been preparing the world for Jesus from the very beginning.

1. The creation of the world. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Once there was nothing, then God spoke and brought the entire universe into existence. Genesis tells us God created the world, but we discover in the New Testament that it was Jesus who did the work! “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). It’s not a perfect example, but it’s like God the Father is the architect who designs the plans for the universe, while Jesus is the master builder who rolls up his sleeves and brings the universe into existence. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the creator of the world.*

2. Sabbath rest. After God made the world in six days, he rested on the seventh day. “So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work (Genesis 2:3). As God rested on the seventh day, his people are commanded to rest, too—which ultimately points to Jesus! During his ministry, Jesus said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). That rest is not only physical, but it’s also emotional because we know we are

loved because we are accepted in Christ. It's spiritual rest because instead of seeking justification by works or sacrifices, we find justification through Jesus' finished work on our behalf. It's eternal rest, because we will have peace and unity with God forever. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the ultimate Sabbath rest.*

3. After God created the world, God formed **Adam**, the image bearer of God, the first human, the prototype for the rest of humanity. But Adam rejected God's commands and became **patient zero for sin and death**. The COVID virus had a patient zero; one person was infected, and then that infection spread to the entire world. Adam, the first human, became infected with sin, and it spread to every one of his offspring. Every anxiety you carry, every pain, every loss, every disappointment, every fracture in the world, can be traced back to Adam's sin. But God promised to send a new kind of Adam to the world to reverse the curse on humanity. Romans 5:17, 19 says, "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners (and experienced death), so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (and reign in life)." *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the new Adam, patient zero for righteousness and life.*

4. After Adam and Eve were lured into sin by Satan, God promised **a savior from the human race**. It wouldn't be like the ancient myths, in which Hermes came as a god and delivered messages to humanity. God himself would become a human being. God said to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring" (Genesis 3:15). The savior would be from her offspring, an actual descendant of a woman. This is what theologians refer to as the proto-evangelion—the very first gospel message in the Bible, the promise that God would come as a human being to save the world. And it came true! "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, *born of a woman*" (Galatians 4:4). *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the eternal God become human.*

5. **The bruised serpent crusher.** God not only promises that the savior will be fully God and fully man, but he also says to the snake in the garden, "(The Messiah) will crush (the serpent's) head, and (the serpent) will strike (the Messiah's) heel" (Genesis 3:15). This has a deep meaning! "Strike the Messiah's heel" is a reference to the cross, the crucifixion, and the death of Jesus. It will be through the cross that Jesus, the Messiah, crushes Satan's head! The cross of Christ and the final solution to sin was promised all the way back in the Garden of Eden. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the bruised victor over Satan, sin, and death.*

6. **Covering for sin & shame.** After Adam and Eve sinned, they became aware of their nakedness and wanted to sew together fig leaves to conceal themselves, which is symbolic of their self-consciousness, their lack of innocence and vulnerability, their fear of being fully seen and fully known, and points toward shame and hiding. All of this goes to show the broken, insufficient, failed paths we humans take to cover ourselves up (leaves crinkle really fast!). God saw their futile efforts and had compassion on them. "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). God made a more adequate covering for Adam and Eve with garments of skin, meaning an animal had to die to cover them, which means a life had to be taken, a sacrifice had to be made. Turn the kaleidoscope and you'll find it pointing to Jesus—when his life would be taken, when he would make the ultimate sacrifice. Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death. Jesus' sacrifice allows us to stand before God unblemished, and even purifies our consciences from our sin. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the ultimate covering for sin & shame.*

7. **Abel—innocent blood crying for justice.** Among their many children, Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain, the older brother, was jealous of the younger brother, so he lured him into a field and killed him. Afterward, he tried to conceal what he had done. When God asked Cain where his brother was, Cain played innocent and ignorant: “I have no idea!” God cut right through the gaslighting and said, “Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10). The blood of an innocent man was shed—and was crying out for justice, crying out for an appropriate response! If you look at Abel’s blood through a kaleidoscope, you see Jesus. Hebrews 12:24 says, “You have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” Jesus doesn’t say, “Punish them for what they’ve done,” but instead he says, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they’ve done.” Just like Abel’s blood, Jesus’ innocent blood cries out to God, but it speaks a better word; rather than crying out for justice, it cries out for mercy. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—innocent blood crying for mercy.*

8. **The righteous man who saved the world by escaping the flood judgment.** In chapter 6, we see that all of humanity has become corrupt, rotten, and spoiled like an old carton of milk. God regretted even making humanity; he was grieved in his heart. God knew he had to both judge the world and save the world, so he found the one person he could use. “Noah was a righteous man...So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people...So make yourself an ark” (Genesis 6:9, 13-14). His family and two of all the animals were saved through that ark and escaped the flood. Noah was pointing to Jesus, who is the inverse of Noah. Rather than one righteous person being saved and the world being condemned, one righteous person was condemned so the world could be saved. Jesus’ cross became a new ark, the wooden vessel through which the world was saved. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the righteous man who saved the world by absorbing the flood of judgment.*

9. In Genesis 11, we see **the failed path to heaven—humanity divided.** Generations after the flood, humanity was still together as one, living in the same regions, speaking the same language. But their hearts and motives were wicked, and “They said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we may make a name for ourselves’” (Genesis 11:4). In pride, they tried to make their own way to heaven, which of course failed miserably; it came crashing down like a four-year-old’s Magna Tile set. No longer able to understand one another, humanity became divided and segmented, distanced from God and distant from one another. Until Jesus came, Acts 2, Ephesians 2, and Galatians 3 say that the cross of Christ was like the healing of Babel. Jesus united humanity, abolishing the divide between men and women, Jews and Greeks, slave and free, and through his life he made a way from earth to heaven. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the finished path to heaven—humanity united.*

10. After the tower of Babel, people spread throughout the world and moved further away from the Lord. Then God decided to continue his rescue mission for the world through a man named **Abraham—left his father and homeland to bless the world.** God said, “If you trust me and embark on this journey in faith, the entire world will be blessed through you.” The New Testament tells us, “Scripture...announced the gospel in advance to Abraham” (Galatians 3:8). Because of his faith, Abraham not only became an earthly ancestor of Jesus, but he also became an example of what Jesus would do. If you are looking at Abraham and turn the kaleidoscope, you see a picture of Jesus. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—left his Father and his homeland to bless the world.*

11. After Abraham won a significant battle, he met a man named **Melchizedek**, who is both **a priest AND a king.** Nowhere else in the Old Testament do we find someone like him. Kings will come from

the tribe of Judah. Priests will come from the tribe of Levi. People could potentially qualify to be a king, or they could qualify to be a priest, but they couldn't qualify to be both. He was the only individual in the Old Testament to be a priest and a king! What does the New Testament say about Jesus? "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7:17). Jesus is a priest who offers a sacrifice that washes our sins as white as snow, and he also rules as king over the entire universe. He is not one or the other, he is both, at the exact same time! *Genesis anticipates Jesus—a priest AND a king.*

12. In Genesis 15, Abraham doubted if God was really going to keep his promise to give him a son, to give him the land, and to bless the world through him, so God made **covenant of torn flesh and blood**. Animals were cut in two, symbolically communicating that if the promise wasn't kept, what happened to those animals would happen to the person making the promise—he would be utterly cursed. Rather than Abraham walking through the torn flesh, which would have been the normal practice, God caused Abraham to fall asleep and God himself walked through the torn apart animals, promising that when we are unfaithful to the covenant, *he* will pay the price, which he did on the cross. We were cursed because we broke the covenant, but "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). The redemptive cross of Christ was foreshadowed in Genesis 15. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—a new covenant of torn flesh and blood.*

13. In Genesis 16 we learn about the compassion and tenderheartedness of the Lord; he is **the God who understands us**. Hagar, an Egyptian slave woman who had been abused and mistreated was on the run and desperate; she felt all alone. Unexpectedly, God drew near to her and she said, "You are the God who sees me" (Genesis 16:13). She gave God a name: "El Roi"—you are the God who sees, the God who has come close, the God who understands. This is a glimpse in the book of Genesis of the ultimate lengths God will go to understand us. "Jesus shared in our humanity...made fully human in every way" (Hebrews 2:14, 16). The eternal one took on flesh; the creator became a part of creation so he could identify with us, relate to us, and empathize with us perfectly. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the God who completely understands us.*

14. In Genesis 21, Abraham and Sarah finally had their child, the child they had been waiting for their entire lives. Their son came into the world and was given the name **Isaac—the promised son, miraculously born to a 90-year-old woman**. Sarah couldn't comprehend it. When she was told that it would really happen, all she could do was laugh in disbelief. Isaac's miraculous birth anticipates yet another miraculous birth. Mary was told by an angel, "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus." Mary asked, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," replied the angel. (See Luke 1:31, 34, 35.) Unlike Sarah, Mary didn't laugh. She said, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38). *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the promised son, miraculously born to a virgin.*

15. In Genesis 22, as a test of faith, God called Abraham to take his son, the son he loved, and offer him as a sacrifice. Isaac carried the wood up the mountain, and as he did, he asked his father a haunting question: "We have the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb?" Isaac didn't know that Abraham was told to take his son's life, until the altar was built and Isaac was laid on it. Right before his father took his life, God spoke and stayed the execution of **Isaac—the beloved son who was nearly sacrificed**. This points unmistakably to Jesus, who would carry wood, his own cross, to the place where he would lay down his life. As the soldiers raised up the hammer to drive those nails into

his body, no voice from heaven rang out to save this son's life. He took the punishment we deserved, by his stripes we are healed. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—The beloved son who was sacrificed.*

16. That story on Mount Moriah prefigures Jesus in two ways, not only through Isaac, but through **the sacrificial animal who took Isaac's place**. Rather than Isaac's life being taken, God provided an animal whose horns were caught in a tree. That animal took his place. It was a substitute, just like Jesus. When he appeared for his public ministry, John the Baptist said of Jesus, "Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29). Galatians 2:20 says, "Jesus loved me and gave himself for me." If you look at that ram in Genesis 22 through the kaleidoscope, you see that *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the ultimate sacrifice who took our place.*

17. Isaac went on to live a full life. He had two sons, one of whom was named Jacob. One night, when Jacob was running for his life, he paused for a rest and had a dream. Genesis 28 tells us he saw **a ladder connecting heaven and earth**. Angels were going up and coming down. Jacob said, "Surely God is in this place." Many years later, when Jesus called disciples to follow him he said, "Very truly I tell you, you will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man" (John 1:51). Before Jesus ever began his public ministry, he handed the kaleidoscope to his followers and said, "That ladder all the way back in Genesis—that was pointing to me. Jesus is the ultimate way God has come down to us, and he is the only path we can take to get to God. Jesus is the ultimate way God has come down to us, and he is the only path we can take to get to God. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the ultimate ladder connecting heaven and earth.*

18. Jacob goes on to have twelve sons, and he has a favorite son named Joseph, who one night has a dream that all his brothers, and eventually his entire family, will come and bow before him. He was **Joseph—the favored son, before whom his brothers bow**. The Bible says that one day, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:10-11). *Genesis anticipates Jesus—the favored son, before whom everyone bows.*

19. Joseph had a dream about his exalted future, but the road to exaltation was filled with betrayal, injustice, and pain. Eventually, he would be **Joseph—who was betrayed, sold, stripped, accused...but then later saved the world**. He foreshadowed Jesus in so many ways. Like Joseph, Jesus would be betrayed by someone as close as a brother, sold for thirty pieces of silver (the price of a slave), falsely accused of crimes he did not commit, and then stripped of his clothes as he was flogged before his execution, the ultimate pit. But that was the way in which Jesus enacted a plan to save the world. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—who was betrayed, sold, stripped, accused...but then later saved the world.*

20. When Joseph came to power, his brothers who betrayed him came to Egypt to buy grain. Eventually Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, who were terrified and assumed they were going to receive his wrath. But he was **Joseph—who forgives and restores his brothers**. Jesus did the same. When Jesus was surrounded by soldiers and arrested, when he was in the moment of greatest need, all the disciples deserted him and fled, he was left all alone, and even Peter denied him three times (Matthew 26). *Genesis anticipates Jesus—who forgives and restores his brothers.*

21. Here's one final connection. When Benjamin, one of Joseph's brothers, was condemned and facing enslavement, his older brother Judah went to Joseph and said, "His father loves him with all his heart. He couldn't handle the thought of not having his son restored to him. I'll pay his debt so he

can be set free.” He was **Judah—who, to restore a beloved son to his father, traded places with his condemned brother.** This is the climax and the turning point of the entire story—an older brother who laid his life down for his younger brother, so he could be restored to his father. This is the gospel pre-incarnate in Genesis. Jesus knew that our heavenly father could not bear eternity without his children, so he paid the ultimate price, he inherited our debt so we could be set free. *Genesis anticipates Jesus—who, to restore beloved sons and daughters to their father, traded places with us.*

The Bible isn’t a random collection of stories. It’s not a history catalog. It’s sixty-six books that all point to Jesus—the author of life, the author of salvation, the Alpha and the Omega, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Let’s fix our eyes on him! And let’s also take heart: if God has been telling one story so faithfully, through so many people through so many years, you can trust him with this chapter of your story, too.