

The Basics of Christianity

Was Jesus the Prophesied Messiah?

Luke 24:13-48

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INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing with "The Basics of Christianity" series. The purpose of this series is to make us more effective in our witness to those outside the church who still need to know about the Gospel.

Previously, we have looked at the major religions of the world and went through a systematic methodology in order to separate truth from error. In the end Christianity stood apart from all other religions.

Next we learned that we can know that there is a God by looking at His creation, the laws of nature, and our ability to know good from evil by our conscience. At this point we may not know who this God is but we know that there had to be a creator. This is one of the ways in which the true God revealed Himself to mankind. Knowing that there had to be a Creator, rules out Atheism (there is no God) and Agnosticism (the existence of God cannot be known with certainty).

Then we looked at the possibility that the Bible that we have today is actually the inspired Word of God. Based upon the **internal evidence** of fulfilled prophecy and coherency of message and **external evidence** containing places that have been archeologically proven to have existed and accurate historical accounts and the **impact** that it has made upon the lives of people, we concluded that it had to be the "inspired word of God" that it claims to be.

Then we looked at the gods of the different major religions and tried to identify the TRUE God Who created the universe and mankind. All of the evidence points to the tri-unity God of the Bible.

With that behind us we will now look at historical evidence and the scriptures to determine if Jesus was the Messiah that was prophesied throughout the Old Testament.

Some of the most dramatic evidence that the Bible is a supernatural book and not a collection of stories and myths, is in the realm of fulfilled Bible prophecy. These prophecies were made as early as 2150 BC in the book of Job until around 400 BC with the major and minor prophets. It has been estimated that there are some 2500 prophecies in the Bible, almost 2000 of which have been fulfilled to the letter. Some have identified over 450 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled by Christ. Clearly the fulfillment of all of them by one Man would be literally impossible based on chance alone.

[All Stand and Read Scripture](#)

Luke 24:13-48 (NASB95)

13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 **But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.** 17 And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" 19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." (This is the point where I wish I could have joined in the walk with a tape recorder.) 25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. 31 **Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.** 32 They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and *said to them, "Peace be to you." 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them.

44 **Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."** 45 **Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

Prayer

BODY:

I. O.T. Messianic Prophecies and Their Fulfillment.

Luke 24:44 (NASB95)

⁴⁴ Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

ILLUSTRATION:

Probability is a branch of mathematics that measures the likelihood that a given event will occur. To begin, let's look at some interesting "odds". According to a mathematician, the following odds exist:

Being struck by lightning within the year is 1 in 700,000. (700 Thousand)

Becoming president of America is 1 in 10,000,000. (10 Million)

A meteorite landing on your house is 1 in 180,000,000,000,000 (180 Trillion)

As you can see, the probability of being struck by lightning, becoming president, or having a meteorite land on your house, progressively increases, given the event; however, someone somewhere will meet that probability, and that someone could be you.

The odds of ever achieving just one these events is very unlikely. Consider how unlikely it would be to have all three events happen in your lifetime! The principle of probability states that the chance of one thing happening is "1 in A", and the chance of another independent thing happening is "1 in B", then the chance that they shall both happen is "1 in (A * B)". So the likelihood that you would be struck by lightning in a given year and becoming president would be 1 in 700,000 times 10 million.

If you were to also have a want a meteorite land on your house, the odds would be 1 in 700,000 times 10 million times 180 trillion. That would be (126 with 23 zeros behind it!).

The reason why prophecy is an indication of the divine authorship of the Scriptures, and hence a testimony to the trustworthiness of the Message of the Scriptures, is because of the minute probability of fulfillment.

Anyone can make predictions. Having those prophecies fulfilled is vastly different. In fact, the more statements made about the future, and the more the detail, then the less likely the precise fulfillment will be.

- For example, what is the likelihood of a person predicting today the **exact city in which the birth of a future leader would take place** hundreds of years from now? This is indeed what the prophet Micah did 700 years before the Messiah.
- Further, what is the likelihood of predicting the **precise manner of death** that this new, unknown religious leader would experience,
- Then predict a manner of **death presently unknown, and to remain unknown for hundreds of years**? Yet, this is what David did in 1000 B.C.

- Again, what is the likelihood of predicting the **specific date of the appearance** of some great future leader, hundreds of years in advance? This is what Daniel did, 530 years before Christ.

Some would claim that Christ just knew the Old Testament scriptures and just did the prophecies or that the New Testament writers just "fulfilled" them through their writings.

But you have to ask the question:

- How does someone "arrange" to be born in a specific family?
- How does one "arrange" to be born in a specified city, in which their parents don't actually live?
- How does one "arrange" their own death - and specifically by crucifixion, with two others, and then "arrange" to have their executioners gamble for His clothing (John 16:19; Psalms 22:18)?
- How does one "arrange" to be betrayed in advance?
- How does one "arrange" to have the executioners carry out the regular practice of breaking the legs of the two victims on either side, but not their own?

Then we must consider the even more difficult prophecies to fulfill!

- How would you "arrange" to be born of a virgin?
- How would you "arrange" to be God and also be man?
- How does one "arrange" to escape from a grave and appear to people after having been killed?

Indeed, it may be possible for someone to fake one or two of the Messianic prophecies, but it would be impossible for any one person to arrange and fulfill all of these prophecies.

How true, then, it must be that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, if he had over 450 identifying characteristics well in advance, and fulfilled them all! In fact, what does the science of probability make of this?

For example, concerning Micah 5:2, where it states the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, a professor Stoner and his students determined the average population of BETHLEHEM from the time of Micah to the present; then they divided it by the average population of the earth during the same period.

They concluded that the chance of one man being born in Bethlehem was one in 300,000.

After examining only eight different prophecies, they conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10 with 17 zeros behind it.

ILLUSTRATION:

To illustrate how large the number 10^{17} IS (a figure with 17 zeros), Stoner gave this illustration:

Suppose that we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They'll cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets

would've had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.

But, of course, there are many more than eight prophecies. In another calculation, Stoner used 48 prophecies and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is the incredible number 10^{157} .

This is the result from considering a mere 48 prophecies. Obviously, the probability that over 450 prophecies (a number that we struggle to even identify and agree on) would be fulfilled in one man by chance is vastly smaller.

II. The Claims of Christ

Not only did Christ fulfill all of the Messianic prophecies, but he also claimed to be the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, the one and only way by which we can enter into Heaven. **These are high claims.**

John 1:1-3 (NASB95)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Here Christ is saying that He is the Son of God and has been with His Father eternally. Everything was created by Him.

John 14:6-11 (NASB95)

⁶ Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

⁷ If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him."

⁸ Philip *said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." ⁹ Jesus *said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and *yet* you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how *can* you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. ¹¹ Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.

Christ not only CLAIMED to be God, the Creator, and our Savior, He backed it up with miracles. John the Baptist was in prison and had heard of Christ's miracles and wanted to know for sure if Jesus was the Messiah of the Old Testament prophecies. By the way, Christ and Messiah are the same thing. Christ is the Greek name and Messiah the Jewish.

Matthew 11:2-6 (NASB95)

² Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent *word* by his disciples ³ and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" ⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ *the* blind receive sight and *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed and *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised up, and *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

III. The Confirmation By Miracles

Matthew 27:45-54 (NASB95)

45 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.

46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” **47** And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, *began* saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.” **48** Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. **49** But the rest of *them* said, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.” **50** And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. **51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.**

God and Christ used miracles to validate that what was happening was from God. Not only at the crucifixion, but also during Christ's ministry and during the growth of the early church through the Apostles and Christians who were given the power of the Holy Spirit through the apostles. To those who would listen and reason, there was no doubt that Christ was the Messiah.

52 The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. **54** Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, “**Truly this was the Son of God!**”

Another miracle. The moment that Jesus Christ's physical body died, he brought many dead people to life in the city of Jerusalem? It's true! The people were alive and healthy again. Many people saw them in the streets and homes of that great city and were glad to see them again. They had been dead, some perhaps for years, and now they were alive **because of Jesus' great power!**

CONCLUSION:

Here is a fact that is even more amazing! *Everyone* who dies and is a true follower of Jesus Christ will experience this same, awesome, life-giving power. Jesus will give them a new body back again—alive, healthy and strong—a glorious body prepared to live eternally. The scriptures say it will happen in the twinkling of an eye. Won't that be wonderful! Millions and perhaps billions of people will be made alive again. Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, grandparents—every person that is a true follower of Jesus will be alive again—forever with our Creator in Heaven.

You can be one of those people! If you haven't already done so. Admit that you are a sinner that deserves punishment and is lost without Christ. Accept His free gift of salvation and life. Become a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Giver of Life.

Go Tell It On the Mountain.