

## From Acorn to Oak

Why We Believe the Bible is the Word of God, Part 2: Fulfilled Prophecies

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Would you consider it reasonable to make an investment in a business venture if you knew you had only one chance in  $10^{17}$  to lose? Of course! Any reasonable person would love to have that likelihood of a return on his or her money. Did you know that a far greater probability exists that Jesus of Nazareth is the only man who has ever lived to fulfill all of the predictions concerning Christ in the Old Testament?

In the first essay we looked at three reasons why it is reasonable to believe that the Bible is God's Word and therefore true. We considered that Jesus, himself, affirmed the Old Testament, eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection and other events wrote the New Testament, and historical writings and archeological findings confirm Scriptural statements. Now let us consider a fourth reality that is sufficient evidence to convince one who is sincerely seeking the truth.

### **The Bible contains an extraordinary number of fulfilled prophecies.**

Two professors, one of mathematics and astronomy (Peter Stoner), and the other of physics and math who also holds a Ph.D. in astrophysics from Cornell University (Robert Newman), calculated the statistical probability of only a small number of Biblical prophecies being fulfilled in any other way than according to the statements in the Bible. They conducted their studies with the help of over 600 college students.

With regard to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, they considered what the probability would be of any man other than Jesus of Nazareth fulfilling the predictions in the Old Testament. The assumption in this case is that the prophets are writing only from their own wisdom and not with the special guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is our understanding of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Taking only eight prophecies, e.g., that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), that thirty pieces of silver would be cast in the temple and be given to a potter (Zechariah 11:13), and that his hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16), the mathematicians and their students considered what a conservative estimate would be for any man the world over to the present time to fulfill each prophecy. They concluded that the chance any man from the time of the predictions to the present could have fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in  $10^{17}$ .

To help us understand the significance of such a number, the professors explained that if  $10^{17}$  silver dollars were laid side by side, they would cover the whole state of Texas two feet deep. Let us now mark one of those silver dollars and thoroughly stir it into the total mass, blindfold someone, and ask him or her to find that specially marked coin. The chance that he or she would find that one coin would be the same as any one man fulfilling all eight prophecies.

As astonishing as this finding is, it is overshadowed by further considerations. These calculations were done on only eight predictions concerning the Christ. Over 300 prophecies have been identified by Biblical scholars concerning the coming of Christ, and Jesus of Nazareth has fulfilled them all. When the mathematicians calculated the probability of any man fulfilling just sixteen they arrived at the figure of 1 in  $10^{45}$ .

Using the previous illustration, if this many silver dollars were made into a solid ball with its center at the earth, it would extend in all directions more than 30 times as far as from the earth to the sun. You can imagine how difficult it would be to pick out a marked dollar from that large a mass.

The chance of any one man fulfilling only forty-eight of the over 300 prophecies is 1 in  $10^{157}$ , which is so large a number that silver dollars would not help to visualize it. Think of the implications not only for the rest of the prophecies concerning Christ but also of all the other prophecies in the Bible as well. The probability of only eleven prophecies, concerning ten Old Testament cities and the land of Palestine, coming true if written only from the calculated guess of the human writer comes out to be 1 in  $5.76 \times 10^{59}$ , an inconceivably large number.

Many other fulfilled prophecies could be cited. However, the evidence is compelling to conclude with the church throughout history, that God specially inspired and guided the writers of the Bible to inscribe what he wanted us to know and do.