

WHY TRUST THE BIBLE?

Revised and Condensed



SPENCER STEWART

Why Trust the Bible?
Copyright © 2004, 2010 by Spencer Stewart

Project one28 Publishing
P.O. Box 531
El Dorado, KS 67042

www.ProjectOne28.com

Cover Image: www.facsimile-editions.com/en/ds/
The significance of the Great Isaiah Scroll, 1QIs^A, dated c. 100 B.C., is explained on page four.

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good news Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scriptures marked NIV are from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scriptures marked NASB taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Manuscript Attestation	
Old Testament	3
New Testament	4
Mistakes?	5
Who Wrote Them and When?	6
Why the Apostles Could Not Lie	7
Non-Christian Support	8
Fulfilled Prophecy	10
Conclusion	17

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is without doubt the most unique book ever written. It contains sixty-six books compiled by more than forty human writers during a timespan of about 1,500 years; yet its internal consistency remains unequalled. Originally written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), the Bible has now been translated into more than 2,400 languages across the world.¹ At the rate Wycliffe Bible Translators are working, within this generation the world will possess its first text translated into every language.² Attempts by political and religious leaders over the last 2,000 years to eliminate the Bible all failed miserably. Bernard Ramm wrote:

No other book has been so chopped, knived, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology or *belles lettres* of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? With such venom and skepticism? With such thoroughness and erudition? Upon every chapter, line and tenet? The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions.³

However, the attacks on the Bible's credibility resound as loud as ever in our generation. One local high school senior recently said, "I believe Jesus is like Santa Claus; there was a real Jesus, but the facts have turned to fiction as the stories were embellished over the years." In response, how can we know we have not been deceived? Faith in Jesus Christ hinges upon reliable accounts of historical events (1 Cor. 15:14-20). Have they been distorted over time? Are they trustworthy?

This booklet aims to present the facts. The Bible has not been distorted over time. Archaeologists have uncovered ancient manuscripts thousands of years apart that remained virtually identical. The Gospels were written by eyewitnesses of Jesus' death and resurrection in the lifetime of hundreds of other eyewitnesses. The writers could not have lied without the other eyewitnesses exposing it. Instead, thousands upon thousands believed. Jesus is not like Santa Claus. Jesus is a Man who really lived, who really claimed to be the Son of God, and who really died and rose back to life to prove it is true.

¹ <http://www.biblesociety.org/index.php?id=22>

² Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999) 9.

³ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953) 232-233. Qtd. in McDowell, 11.

MANUSCRIPT ATTESTATION

Some may think the numerous English “versions” of the Bible prove the Bible is uncertain and unreliable. Please understand our modern Bibles are translations. They differ somewhat because of reasonable opinions among scholars about the best modern English word to choose in translating an ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word. Here our first concern is if the translators of our English Bibles can have confidence that the original words have been preserved throughout the centuries. Then, were those original words true history? Lastly, we will examine the Bible’s prophecies to decide if its God deserves our devotion.

If we possessed the original manuscripts of the Bible, then the debate could be settled easily, but no ancient writing enjoys that luxury (mainly because of the crude materials). Fortunately, the credibility of the Old Testament is strengthened by the process it was copied. Copying by hand invites error, but the Old Testament was transmitted by a special group of scholars called scribes. Their Hebrew name was *soferim*, meaning *to count*, because they counted practically everything in order to ensure accuracy. F.F. Bruce, one of the most highly esteemed Biblical scholars, explained:

They counted, for example, the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurs in each book; they pointed out the middle letter of the Pentateuch [first five books, written by Moses] and the middle letter of the whole Hebrew Bible, and made even more detailed calculations than these. “Everything countable seems to be counted,” says Wheeler Robinson, and they made up mnemonics by which the various totals might be readily remembered.⁴

Bernard Ramm summarized:

Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. With their *massora* they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word, and paragraph.... Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca? ⁵

The transcribers followed numerous regulations while copying Scripture. The rules involved exactly what to wear, how to wash their

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments: How We Got Our English Bible* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1950. Reprints 1963, 1984) 117. Qtd. in McDowell, 76.

⁵ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953) 230-231. Qtd. in McDowell, 9.

hands, what to write on, what to write with, what color of ink and the specific recipe to make it, how many letters to write per line and lines per page. In addition, not a single letter could be written from memory without looking at the original first.⁶

In 1947 an Arab shepherd boy at Qumran stumbled upon the Dead Sea Scrolls, our earliest copies of both Old and New Testament writings. The scrolls dated from about 250 B.C. to 50 A.D. An entire scroll of Isaiah was dated 1,000 years before previously discovered copies – yet they were virtually identical.⁷ The find reaffirmed the scribes' reliability generation after generation. The Old Testament has not been distorted.

NEW TESTAMENT

We can compare the New Testament to other ancient writings with two tests: (1) the number of surviving manuscripts, and (2) the time gap between the originals and the copies. More copies allow scholars to better reconstruct the original. A smaller time gap limits the opportunity for errors to enter the copies. The Bible wins this contest by a landslide.

The best attested, non-Christian ancient work, Homer's *Iliad*, survived in 643 copies. The copy nearest the original was separated by about 400 years, if counting a fragment, and about 1,300 years for the earliest complete manuscript. Compare this with the Bible: archaeologists have uncovered at least 5,686 copies in the original Greek language. That is more than 5,000 documents more than Homer's *Iliad*. The John Rylands Papyrus (P⁵²) is dated within 50 years of the original, and a fragment of Mark within 17 years.⁸ 383 years closer to the original than the best non-Christian work! Bruce Metzger said, "The quantity of New Testament material is almost embarrassing in comparison with other works of antiquity."⁹

⁶ Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999) 171-172.

⁷ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1974) 19. Qtd. in Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999) 187. This booklet's cover image is that Great Isaiah Scroll.

⁸ McDowell, 34-38. Geisler, 188.

⁹ We also have more than 19,284 ancient translations into languages such as Persian, Ethiopic, Slavic, Latin, and others. That brings the grand total to more than 24,970 manuscripts. There also exist over 36,000 New Testament quotations by the early church leaders – just counting from after the apostles until around 325 A.D. Sir David Dalrymple studied the complete inventory of quotations and found the entire New Testament, except 11 verses! McDowell, 43.

John Warwick Montgomery said “to be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient periods are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament.”¹⁰ Dismissing the Bible demands dismissing every other piece of ancient literature. On the contrary, the Bible deserves higher esteem than any other ancient writing.

THOUSANDS OF MISTAKES?

Negative critics protest loudly that thousands of mistakes exist in the various manuscripts. The vast majority of these are simply spelling mistakes or slips of the pen.¹¹ The immense number of copies give Bible scholars the ability to overcome minute errors. The following example is adapted from Dr. Norman Geisler.¹² Imagine possessing one manuscript that read:

#esus is Lord, the Son of the living God.

We could be certain of the intended meaning, right? But what if we received another manuscript?

Jesus is Lord, the @on of the living God.

Then we could be convinced even more of the original meaning. Now imagine almost 25,000 more manuscripts with small errors in various places, plus more than 36,000 quotations from early church leaders.

This science of textual criticism, comparing manuscripts to reconstruct the missing original, has experienced more thorough and complete work on the Bible than any other ancient book. Dr. Geisler summarized, “There are more manuscripts, earlier manuscripts, better copied manuscripts, and manuscripts written by more people who were closer to the events than for any other piece of ancient history.”¹³ We can

¹⁰ John W. Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1971) 29. Qtd. in McDowell, 35.

¹¹ Dr. Geisler wrote, “There is widespread misunderstanding among critics about the ‘errors’ in the biblical manuscripts. Some have estimated there are about 200,000 of them. First of all, these are not ‘errors’ but variant readings, the vast majority of which are strictly grammatical. Second, these readings are spread throughout more than 5300 manuscripts, so that a variant spelling of one letter of one word in one verse in 2000 manuscripts is counted as 2000 ‘errors.’” Not one of these affects any Christian doctrine. *Op. cit.* 532.

¹² *Ibid.*, 79.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 381.

be confident we possess a Bible that remains, for all practical purposes, identical to the original.

WHO WROTE THEM AND WHEN?

Some critics claim the apostles did not actually write the New Testament – 100 to 200 years later, people took on false names and corrupted factual history with myth. Some critics declare even if the apostles wrote the gospels, they lied and gave false reports. These assertions do not hold water.

The New Testament must have been written before the end of the first century because many early church leaders quoted it. The book of Acts must have been written before the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., because it records temple ceremonies still in practice. It must have been written before 66 A.D., because it does not reference the Jewish War or Nero's persecution of Christians in the late 60s. Acts completed a two-part work by the physician Luke; therefore, the first was written even earlier (the Gospel of Luke).

Dr. Geisler wrote, "First Corinthians is accepted even by critics as coming from the pen of Paul in 55 or 56, only twenty-two or twenty-three years after Jesus' death."¹⁴ Paleographer Jose O'Callahan claims among Dead Sea Scroll fragments from Cave 7 were fragments from several New Testament writings, including the Gospel of Mark, dated around 50 A.D. Before he identified the texts, "archaeologists who discovered Cave 7 attested that it showed no signs of being opened since it was sealed in A.D. 70 and that its contents date from no later."¹⁵ If fragments of Mark's copies existed around 50 A.D., then he wrote the original even earlier.

Even the radical critic John A.T. Robinson, who played a role in the "Death of God" movement, wrote a book in 1976 called *Redating the New Testament*. He placed its dates even earlier than many conservative scholars, admitting the evidence points toward at least two gospels written within a decade of Jesus' crucifixion.¹⁶ There simply was not

¹⁴ Ibid., 620. Especially important for the creed in 1 Cor. 15:3-7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 547.

¹⁶ John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976). Qtd. in Geisler, 529.

enough time for myths to be introduced into the New Testament writings.¹⁷

WHY THE APOSTLES COULD NOT LIE – AND GET AWAY WITH IT

Many times the New Testament writers appealed to the memories of their audience to confirm the trustworthiness of their reports. Looking back to the creed in 1 Corinthians 15, for example, Paul claimed most of the 500 people who simultaneously saw Jesus after His resurrection were still alive (15:6). Why on earth would he do that if he was lying? If even just a few of those 500 testified otherwise, the apostles' story would have crumbled. Remember this point clearly: the apostles could not have introduced mythological lies into the gospel story because many eyewitnesses of Jesus' life still lived among them and would have exposed the truth immediately. Common sense directs us to conclude the apostles gave trustworthy reports of historical events.

THE APOSTLES' CREDIBLE CHARACTER

While on the topic of the apostles' character and credibility, we should examine two other important aspects. First, the apostles were not charlatan TV preachers, peddling profit. No one paid them large sums of money to create fabrications, nor did they sell the writings for income. The scenario was the exact opposite. Those who hated Jesus enough to kill Him in the first place, hated even more the apostles' declarations that He defeated death and was raised back to life. All of the apostles deserted Jesus during His trial and crucifixion (Mt. 26:31, 56), but their demeanor completely changed three days later. Suddenly, they proclaimed His resurrection to everyone, even after being beaten, flogged, stoned, and commanded by authorities not to talk about Jesus anymore. Surely not *all* of these men would face persecution and die for what they *knew* was a lie. Their undying commitment to a resurrected Christ gives pause to the critics.

Secondly, the apostles included in their writings many negative portrayals of themselves. They repeatedly act in ignorance of Jesus' teachings. Peter tried to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem to be crucified, and Jesus called him "Satan" (*adversary*, Mk. 8:31-33). At Jesus' arrest, Peter drew his sword and cut off an ear of the high priest's slave, and Jesus rebuked him again (Mk. 14:47, Jn. 18:10-11). Then Peter

¹⁷ Dr. Blomberg compares this to the first biographies of Alexander the Great, written more than 400 years after his lifetime [Lee Strobel, *The Case For Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998) 33]. A.N. Sherwin-White's studies show it requires at least two full generations for myth and legend to develop and distort factual history (Geisler, 530).

publicly denied Jesus three times to the point of cursing (Mk. 14:66-72). Why would Peter¹⁸ have Mark write these events down, if not because he desired to be completely accurate and omit no facts, no matter how good or bad they looked? If the apostles were lying, they would have excluded their flaws and exaggerated stories of Jesus. But they did neither.¹⁹

NON-CHRISTIAN SUPPORT

Bertrand Russell wrote in his book *Why I Am Not a Christian*, "Historically it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if he did we know nothing about him."²⁰ He reached this conclusion by simply ignoring loads of evidence to the contrary. First, he discarded all accounts written by the apostles, distrusting them as biased because of their close relationship with Jesus. This is a flawed argument. Our best information about the Nazi Holocaust comes from Jews who were personally there or are descendants of those tortured in concentration camps. Their ethnic pride and experience does not disqualify them; rather, it adds more weight to their words.²¹ But even beyond the apostles, reality defeats Russell's foolish claim.

Gary Habermas, in his book *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ*, detailed 39 ancient, non-Biblical sources that validate more than 100 facts concerning the life of Jesus of Nazareth.²² Ironically, several of the best supporting records of Jesus' life come from bitterly anti-Christian people. For example, the greatest Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus, confirms Jesus "was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius."²³ Other testimonies include Lucian of Samosata, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Emperor Trajan, Mara Bar-Serapion, Josephus ben Mattathias, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Quadratus, and more.

One might assume people such as the Jews, who instigated Jesus' crucifixion, simply would have denied Jesus ever performed miracles. But what they said instead supported Christianity more than they knew. In the Babylonian Talmud we read, "On the eve of Passover they hanged

¹⁸ Mark was Peter's son in the faith (1 Pet. 5:13).

¹⁹ Dr. Craig Blomberg in Strobel, 49-50.

²⁰ New York: Simon & Shuster, 1957, 16.

²¹ Dr. Craig Blomberg in Strobel, 32.

²² Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1996.

²³ Qtd. in McDowell, 121, corroborating Lk. 3:1, 23:24-25.

Yeshu [Hebrew for *Jesus*]...because he practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray.”²⁴ “On the eve of Passover” corresponds with John 19:14. The allegation of sorcery plainly acknowledges Jesus performed supernatural activities – miracles! It accuses Jesus of receiving the power by demonic means rather than from God (cf. Mt. 12:22-32). What we know of Jesus’ good moral character (even from non-Christian sources) can rule out demon possession and conclude He indeed performed miracles by and for the glory of God.²⁵ God desired to confirm His message by doing what only He could do through His Son, Jesus Christ (Mt. 11:2-6, Jn. 10:36-38, 14:10-11, 20:30-31).

It should be acknowledged that the Bible we have now is the Bible as it was initially written. The original content was recorded within the lifetime of hundreds of eyewitnesses, so the apostles could not have introduced mythological elements without their audience blowing the whistle on them.

Believe the Bible records accurate history.²⁶ Then believe the miracle of predicting the future.

²⁴ Sanhedrin 43a; cf. t. Sanh. 10:11; y. Sanh. 7:12; Tg. Esther 7:9. Also, Hierocles also labels Peter and Paul sorcerers in his book *Philalethes* 36.

²⁵ Many dismiss miracles as legendary myth, but if God exists, then miracles are not only possible, but probable.

²⁶ The original *Why Trust the Bible?* contained a section detailing some of the archaeological finds which have supported Biblical history. See projectOne28.com/arch

FULFILLED PROPHECY

Fulfilled prophecy has proven without doubt that God authored the Bible. Prophecy is a prediction of a future event. Fulfilled prophecy is a prediction that actually came true. Reality demands 100 percent perfection in prophecy. Obviously, if a man claims to speak directly from God (and God knows all things), then that man cannot err. If he does err, then he cannot be an ambassador of God's word. Because of this, no major religion other than Christianity dares to attempt prophecy.²⁷ Islam, none; Confucius, none; Buddha, none. Mormon founder Joseph Smith "prophesied" falsely²⁸ on many occasions - warranting immediate rejection of his spiritual principles.

Completely unique from all other religions, the Protestant Christian Bible contains 27 percent prophecy²⁹ - nearly 2,000 unlikely predictions (all hundreds of years in advance) perfectly fulfilled because God initiated the prophecy. There is no way mere humans could have invented these prophecies with such precision. Man is a finite being, limited in knowledge. God *must have* directly authored the Bible through men; no men could do such a thing apart from God.

Consider human attempts to predict the future - and their miserable failure. Dr. Geisler explained:

Amid hundreds of prophecies, Biblical prophets are not known to have made a single mistake.... *The People's Almanac* (1976) did a study of the top twenty-five psychics. The results: Of the total seventy-two predictions, sixty-six (92 percent) were totally wrong.³⁰ An accuracy rate of around 8 percent could easily be explained by chance and a general knowledge of circumstances.³¹

Ninety-two percent wrong! Modern day "psychics" make vague statements in pathetic attempts to increase their chances. God, however, revealed true prophecy with astounding specifics.

²⁷ Considering Judaism as the true beginning of Christianity and not a separate religion.

²⁸ For example, Smith said the Second Coming of Christ would occur in 1891. We are still here. *History of the Church*, vol. 2, 182.

²⁹ Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973), 675. Qtd. in Geisler, 610.

³⁰ Andre Kole and Al Janssen, *Miracles or Magic?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1984.

³¹ Geisler, 615.

THE COMING CHRIST

The Old Testament was completed around 450 B.C. – four-and-a-half centuries before Christ.³² It contains over 300 references and 191 specific details³³ about the coming Christ, the one great Priest and King set apart by God to be Mediator and Ruler of the world. Every single one found fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus!

Jesus' virgin birth was first prophesied in Genesis 3:15 when the LORD spoke to Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman [Eve] and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise His heel" (NIV). No other child in Scripture is called "the seed of woman," but rather "the seed of man." Jesus, however, had no earthly father – only God in heaven. Galatians 4:4 explained the fulfillment of this prophecy in Matthew 1:20, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law."

Isaiah 7:14 also predicted the virgin birth, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin³⁴ shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-35 complete this prophecy.³⁵

God did not want anyone to miss His Son's appearance in the world, so He specified the family tree and singled out the Savior from the rest of humanity. After the Flood, the process of repopulating the earth came only by Noah's three sons (Gen. 9:26-10:2). God eliminated two-thirds of the world by declaring the Christ would come through the lineage of Shem. God then narrowed it from Shem to a man named Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans (11:31-12:1). Abraham had two sons: Isaac and Ishmael. God promised the Christ through Isaac (17:15-21). Genesis 28:13-14 cut the line of Isaac in half when God chose Jacob, not Esau.

³² Critics may argue that date, but the furthest they can push it back is c. 250 B.C. At that time Ptolemy Philadelphus initiated a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Obviously, the originals existed before the translation. The critics cannot answer for the minimum of a 250-year gap without admitting the divine nature of the prophecies.

³³ Payne, 665-70. Qtd. in Geisler, 610.

³⁴ Some skeptics claim this Hebrew word simply meant a young maiden. J.A. Motyer shows scripturally that this word is more specifically "virgin" than others [*The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 85]. Furthermore, it would not be much of a sign from God if a young woman had sex and naturally conceived a child, would it?

³⁵ Jewish targums call Jesus the bastard son of an adulteress mother, admitting Joseph was not the biological father, but ignoring the Holy Spirit.

God then subtracted eleven of Jacob's twelve sons; the Christ would be from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10).

In Isaiah 11:1 God ruled out all family lines but Jesse's, who had at least eight sons. Excluding seven-eighths, the Christ would be of the house of David (1 Chron. 17, 2 Sam. 7). Then Micah 5:2 eliminated all the cities in the world, save one: Bethlehem, which had less than 1,000 inhabitants! As a matter of historical fact, Jesus was indeed a descendant of David, born in the tiny town of Bethlehem.

God disqualified all professions for the Christ, except prophet, speaking to Moses, "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" (Deut. 18:18). 1,400 years later, the "multitudes said, 'This is Jesus, the prophet'" (Mt. 21:11 NIV, cf. Acts 3:20-24). God also accredited Jesus with the performance of miracles, like Moses (Lk. 4:17-21, Mt. 11:2-6; prophesied in Isa. 35:5-6, 42:7, 61:1).

God continued to tell the world how to identify His Son. Isaiah 40:3 predicted the Savior would be preceded by a messenger, "A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (cf. Mal. 3:1). Before Jesus began His public ministry,, "John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near'" (lit., Mt. 3:1-2, cf. 3:3, 11:10; Jn. 1:23; Lk. 1:17).

Now the people were looking for Christ to appear. But where? Isaiah 9:1 foretold, "But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the *Gentiles*." The next six verses described the virgin child called "Mighty God...Prince of Peace," who will reign over David's throne for all eternity. About 1,000 years after that prophecy, "Now when he [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali" (Mt. 4:12-13). "From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near" (lit., 4:17).

THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

Many more facets of Jesus' ministry fulfilled Scripture, but let us skip ahead to the end of the story. Jesus literally fulfilled at least thirty extremely specific prophecies in the "last" twenty-four hours of His life.

These circumstances were out of His control, but the God who has perfect foreknowledge of future events predicted them centuries in advance so we could know they were no accident. These last twenty-four hours culminated God's plan to glorify Himself by saving the world from sin.

The plot began to unravel with Psalm 41:9 predicting the Christ would be betrayed by a friend. Jesus' close friend, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Him with a hypocritical kiss on the cheek, handing Him over to the wicked Pharisees (Mt. 26:49-50, Lk. 22:27-28). Zechariah 11:12 divinely calculated He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. The Pharisees did not give Judas twenty-nine or thirty-one pieces, but exactly thirty (Mt. 26:15). Zechariah 11:13 knew Judas would throw the money down in the house of the LORD, which he did in Matthew 27:5 because of intense guilt. The same verse in Zechariah foretold the abandoned silver would be used to buy a potter's field. The Pharisees did just that, in order to bury strangers (Mt. 27:7).

God prophesied all of the Christ's disciples would forsake Him and flee when He was arrested (Zech. 13:7, fulfilled in Mk. 14:50). Psalm 35:11 predicted the Christ would be accused by false witnesses. Matthew 26:59-60 says even though the chief priests and elders tried to stack many false testimonies against Jesus, no lawful reason existed to execute Him. Isaiah 53:7 foretold the Christ would remain silent before His accusers. Matthew 27:12 recounted Jesus did not answer any of the allegations.

Isaiah 50:6 and Micah 5:1 described the Christ receiving a beating and spitting in His face. "Then they spat in [Jesus'] face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him" (Matt. 26:67 NASB). God also prophesied through David that the Christ would be mocked (Ps. 22:7-8), which the Roman guards did by placing a crown of thorns on His head, a purple robe on His back, a reed in His right hand, and sarcastically taunting, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mt. 27:29; Mk. 15:16-20).

In Psalm 22:16 David prophesied the Christ's enemies would pierce His hands and His feet. This was more than 700 years before crucifixion was used as a form of Roman capital punishment! David had no logical basis to predict what did not yet exist - without God's help. The Jewish form of the death penalty was stoning. If another prophecy had not also come true, Jesus would have been stoned, and the crucifixion prophecy would have been false. Genesis 49:10 said the Savior would not come until the tribe of Judah lost its judicial power. When Herod the Great became ruler over Jerusalem, a Jew no longer reigned. Then during the time of Coponius (7 A.D.), the Jews lost the power to pass the death

sentence.³⁶ This forced them to hand Jesus over to the Roman authorities *to be crucified*, and it fulfilled all of these prophecies. How perfectly God orchestrated His plan of salvation!

Isaiah 53:5, “But He [Christ] was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.” Fast-forward and Pilate, “having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified” (Mt. 27:26).

When Jesus fell under the weight of the cross as He carried it to Golgotha, He fulfilled Psalm 109:24 (in Lk. 23:26). Isaiah 53:12 said He would die with sinners; the Romans placed Jesus on a cross between two thieves (Mt. 27:38). The same verse in Isaiah also prophesied Jesus praying for those who killed Him: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34).

Through this event, Jesus was rejected by His own people (prophesied in Isa. 53:3 and fulfilled in Jn. 7:5, 48). Jesus said, “But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause’” (Jn. 15:25, citing Ps. 69:4). Psalm 38:11 said His friends and relatives would stand far off, which Luke 23:49 confirmed. Psalm 109:25 prophesied, “I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they shake their heads” (NIV). While Jesus hung on the cross, “Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads” (Mt. 27:39 NIV). Psalm 22:17 predicted He would be stared upon (cf. Lk. 23:35). Psalm 22:14 said, “All My bones are out of joint.” Jesus’ shoulders would have dislocated under His body’s weight because of the position He was nailed to the cross.

Psalm 22:18 came true as the soldiers divided Jesus’ garment, but cast lots for His tunic instead of tearing it (Jn. 19:23-24). Psalm 69:21 said He would suffer thirst; in John 19:28 He said, “I thirst.” The soldiers offered Him vinegar and gall (Mt. 27:34), just as God said they would (Ps. 69:21). David divinely anticipated what Christ would cry before He died, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps. 22:1, Mt. 27:46).³⁷ David also predicted the Savior’s last words, “Into your hand I commit My spirit” (Ps. 31:5, Lk. 23:46).

³⁶ McDowell, 195.

³⁷ It is interesting to note that Jews were taught to memorize entire chapters of Scripture from youth. At the climax of this redemptive saga, Jesus quoted the first verse of Psalm 22, which is loaded with prophecy about the crucifixion. The Jews watching His death might have recognized the sacred words and immediately started reciting the rest of the chapter. Jesus was helping them to understand salvation was being purchased before their very eyes!

Right before Jesus cried these things, a fascinating prophecy came true from Amos 8:9: "'And on that day,' declares the Lord GOD, 'I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight.'" This natural phenomenon actually did occur; three non-Biblical sources³⁸ confirm Matthew 27:45, "Now from the sixth hour [*noon*, Jews counted from sunrise] there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour" (cf. Lk. 22:53, 23:44). God exposed the dark evil of that moment.

Roman soldiers customarily broke the legs of offenders to speed their death. (With broken legs, they could not push up their bodies in order to breathe and, therefore, died of asphyxiation.) However, Jesus died sooner than most victims because of the intense scourging beforehand, as well as the stress from the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Lk. 22:44). "But when [the soldiers] came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs" (Jn. 19:33). This fulfilled Psalm 34:20, "He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken."

Instead, one of the soldiers also fulfilled Zechariah 12:10 when he "pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water" (Jn. 19:34).³⁹

Isaiah's prophecy that the Savior would be buried in a rich man's tomb (53:9) came true when Joseph of Arimathea received permission from Pilate to lay Jesus in his new tomb (Mk. 15:42-47).⁴⁰

Astoundingly, the prophet Daniel predicted this exact year. Daniel 9:24-27 prophesied 69 "weeks" would elapse from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the death of the Christ to atone for sin. In Hebrew, this was literally 69 *sevens*, meaning 69 sets of seven *years* (equaling 483). This began in 454 B.C. (Neh. 2:1-8) and ended with the crucifixion of Christ in 30 A.D.⁴¹ Not counting the non-existent "Zero A.D.," this is precisely 483 years. Daniel prophesied this timespan to the "T" at least 80 years before the first event even happened!

³⁸ Thallus, Phlegon, Julius Africanus. Qtd. in Habermas, 196-197, 218; Strobel, 84-85.

³⁹ According to Alexander Metherell, M.D., Ph.D., Jesus endured hypovolemic shock, causing heart failure and a collection of fluid around the heart (called a pericardial effusion) and also the lungs (pleural effusion). Qtd. in Strobel, 199.

⁴⁰ This also lends credibility to the Gospels. If the apostles fabricated a fictitious story, they would not have used a known member of the Jewish council, especially considering he was a member of the group responsible for crucifying their best Friend. They simply recorded honest history.

⁴¹ Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament, 16th Edition* (MasterBooks, 1993-2004) 205-254. See projectOne28.com/69weeks for more explanation.

But thank God the story does not end in a tomb. Even after Jesus died, He continued to fulfill prophecy.

After three days in the tomb, God exerted His power to raise Jesus back to life (Mt. 28:1ff., 1 Cor. 15:4). In this final victory, Jesus defeated death – sin's hold on us. Psalm 16:10 prophesied a millennium in advance, "For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay" (NASB, cf. Acts 2:27, 13:35). Jesus Himself had repeatedly predicted His resurrection on the third day.⁴² *The resurrection proved Jesus was the Son of God* (Rom. 1:4).

Psalm 68:18, Isaiah 52:13, and Daniel 7:13 foretold Christ's ascension (Lk. 24:51, Acts 1:9). Psalm 110:1 envisioned Christ seated at the right hand of God.⁴³ The disciples literally saw the resurrected Man Christ Jesus ascend into the clouds and move His physical body into the spiritual realms. Amazing!

Jesus prophesied before and after His death and resurrection that He would receive from the Father the promised Holy Spirit to pour into believers.⁴⁴ This first happened ten days after His ascension (Acts 2:1-4), and Peter explained (2:16-21, 33) that it fulfilled the prophecy in Joel 2:28.

⁴² Mt. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; Lk 9:22, 18:33, 24:7, 24:46; cf. Gen. 1:11, Jonah 1:17, Hos. 6:2

⁴³ See also Heb. 1:3, 1:13, 10:12-13; Mk. 16:19; Acts 2:34-35; 1 Cor. 15:25.

⁴⁴ Jn. 14:16-17, 26, 16:7-15; Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8

CONCLUSION

God left no room for doubt: Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Savior of the world. Critics are left with little to argue after considering the textual and historical evidence of the Bible's authenticity. But after investigating fulfilled prophecy, "every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God" (Rom. 3:19 NIV). There is no possible way mere humans wrote the Bible. Fulfilled prophecy demands acceptance of reality: God originated and superintended the Bible's production process.

Therefore, the Bible's message is true and poses the most important question of your life: what do you believe about Jesus? He claimed to be the Son of God. He claimed He would be crucified and raised back to life. His miracles, prophecies, and resurrection prove He is who He said He is. Jesus said to the Pharisees, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (Jn. 5:39-40). It would be a tragedy for you to possess this knowledge of the Scriptures, but lack faith in the Lord of the Scriptures. Christianity is not about letters on a page or rules to live by; it is about a personal, loving God who desires an intimate relationship with you - on His gracious terms.

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN SOON

The amount of prophecies fulfilled literally in Jesus' first coming is staggering; the Scriptures give twice as many prophecies about His second coming. After the miraculous, literal fulfillments in His first coming, how much more should we trust and expect His second coming! God is holy, and He will not tolerate evil forever. Jesus is coming back to rid the planet of Satan, sinners, and sin, so He can reign as King of kings with believers forever (Rev. 1:7; 17:14, 22:12-13, 20).

You will soon stand before God's throne of judgment (Acts 17:30-31, Rev. 20:11-15). Every one of your sins will be exposed on that Day. If you believe into Jesus, then the punishment for your sins will already have been paid on the Cross. If you disbelieve in Jesus and reject God's grace, then you will personally bear the punishment for your sins: an eternity of wrath, separated from God in hell (Jn. 3:36, 2 Thess. 1:9, Rev. 20:15).

God created you for His glory and His delight.⁴⁵ But you were born with sin in you because of Grandpa Adam. You grew up to live selfishly

⁴⁵ Isa. 43:7, Prov. 8:27-31

for your own pleasure instead of God's. And that should break your heart.⁴⁶ Hate Self for denying the worthiness of God.⁴⁷ Repent - change your mindset from defining reality apart from Christ. Change your mindset from living for Self to living for Christ.⁴⁸ Seek forgiveness of your sins by believing that Jesus is Lord, who died for your sins and was raised back to life, and you will be saved.⁴⁹ His perfect blood will be your substitutionary sacrifice and will cleanse your sins, and He will send His Holy Spirit into your heart.⁵⁰ Then you will be able to live in relationship with God and fulfill His purposes for you. Because the Spirit of Christ in you lives eternally, you will live eternally.⁵¹

This is the year of the Lord's favor. Believe and be saved while you can. The day of God's vengeance is coming.⁵² He does not want you to perish, but to repent, believe, and receive His love.⁵³ God is worthy of your worship, and He is the joy for which you were created. Be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

⁴⁶ Lk. 18:13-14, 2 Cor. 7:9-10

⁴⁷ Lk. 14:25-33

⁴⁸ Mt. 4:17, 11:20-22, 12:41; Lk. 5:32, 13:3-5, 15:7

⁴⁹ Rom. 10:9-10, 1 Jn. 1:9

⁵⁰ Eph. 1:13-14, 2 Cor. 1:22

⁵¹ Rom. 8:11, Jn. 14:19

⁵² Isa. 61:2

⁵³ 2 Pet. 3:9-10, 1 Tim. 2:4-6

Additional Discipleship Booklets



The Basics:

The Beginning, the Gospel of God's Grace, and the New Beginning

The Kingdom of God:

The Reason Christ Created Man, Became Man, and Is Coming Again

Spirit, Soul, Body:

Created to Relate to the Holy Trinity by Faith

Light Shines in the Darkness:

Scripture Interpreting the Spiritual Drama of Genesis 1:2-3

How to Read the Bible

Day and Night Prayer:

Fire Will Burn on the Altar Until the Return of King Jesus

Free at www.projectone28.com