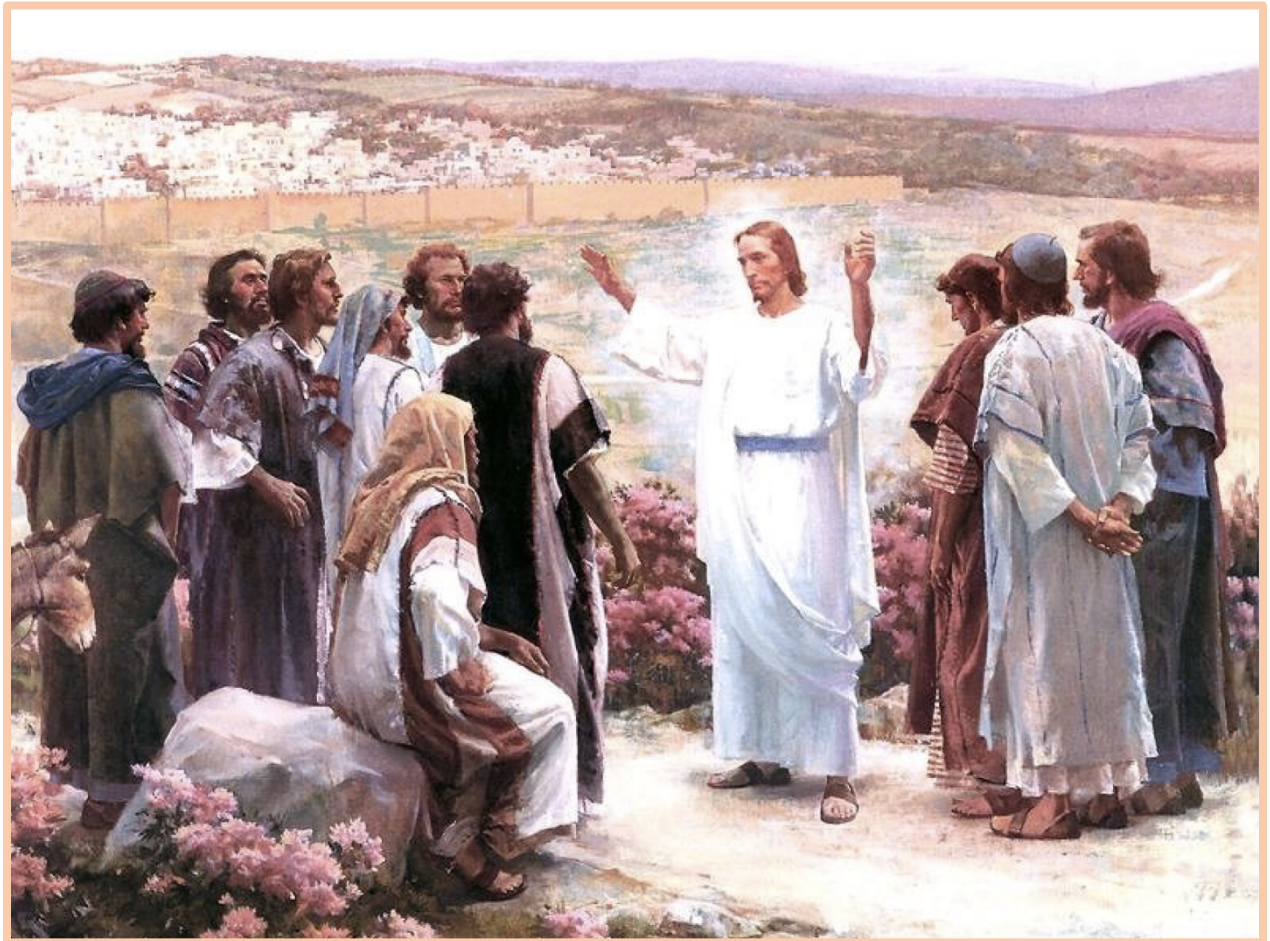


How Sure Can We Be That Jesus Was The Messiah Of Israel?



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Introduction

Christians are often criticized for “only having blind faith.” This study will aim to demonstrate that you do not have to (and should not) rely on “blind faith” in order to believe in God and His Word. To the contrary, we as Christians have an incredibly firm foundation of which to base our faith on. The Bible is a valid basis of faith – a claim this study intends to strongly demonstrate.

As we begin our study, the first thing we need to do is examine three epistemological anchor points that form the basis of our belief in the supernatural origin of the Bible.

Epistemology: The theory of knowledge, its method, its scope, and its limits. Epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion. It defines what we can actually know.

-<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/epistemology> (Retrieved 11/11/18)

Note: We can't fully describe each of the following three points here, but to better understand what we mean by each, please consult the companion study entitled “**The Basis Of Our Epistemology.**”

So, let's examine the three points that form the basis of our epistemology...

-The Basis of our Epistemology

1. The Bible is a highly integrated message system.
2. The Bible contains an astonishing amount of prophecy.

3. The Bible contains intricately hidden subtleties encoded into the very text itself that clearly transcend the knowledge and intent of the human authors.

During this study, we will mainly be investigating Biblical content having to do with Points #1 and 2 – involving integration and prophecy. These two points help support each other. Biblical prophecy proves integration, and Biblical integration involves prophecy. One of the primary ways you can validate the Bible's extra-dimensional origin is through its continual use of prophecy. Let's discuss this further...

As we mentioned, Biblical prophecy proves the integration of the Bible. Integration is a proof of extra-dimensional authorship because of the following reason – the Bible is one continuous story written over a period of almost 1,500 years, by many human authors who mostly didn't know each other and weren't alive at the same time, and yet, we find that the themes and events in Scripture are woven together as one unified story. This points to a common Author who is behind it all, influencing and inspiring the human penmen who wrote down what they were inspired to say.

In other words, imagine your favorite novel or storybook...imagine you one day found out that the chapters were written by different people who mostly didn't know each other and weren't alive at the same time, over a period of 1,500 years...yet, the storyline was flawless, or, to use our term, integrated. Obviously, this is impossible – especially when the earlier chapters predict how the later chapters would turn out with amazing precision – and its predictions align with the record of human history. This points to a common Author outside of time who was guiding and inspiring

the human writers to compose this unified story. This is what we mean by integration.

Let's talk more about prophecy for a moment before continuing. What exactly do we mean by prophecy, and how exactly does this prove anything?

The Bible repeatedly demonstrates its uniqueness by making a habit of describing history before it happens. This is what we mean by prophecy. And if this statement is true, it would require then that the author knew what was going to happen ahead of time, which obviously the human writers couldn't. This characteristic of prophecy is a method of authentication that is unique to the true Author (God), because He exists outside of the dimension of time altogether and enjoys a 100% success rate. In other words, we know the Bible cannot come from man – it must come from a Being outside of time itself.

So, we will find that prophecy is not just an odd curiosity – it's a demonstration that God is real, that He cares, and that He has chosen to reveal to us in advance what His plans are for the world, and for you and I personally. As we go through this study, keep in mind how the content we will examine demonstrates our epistemological anchor-points.

Let's now begin an exercise that concerns the most important theme in the entire Bible: was Jesus actually the Messiah of Israel, and if yes, how confident can we be that He was? Peter Stoner, in his book "Science Speaks," suggested an interesting approach to this issue.

-Peter W. Stoner, "Science Speaks," Chicago: Moody Press, 1963.

The following exercise is based on an adaptation of his approach, done by Chuck Missler in “Cosmic Codes.”

-Chuck Missler, “Cosmic Codes: Hidden Messages from the Edge of Eternity,” Coeur d’Alene, ID: Koinonia House, 1999, pp. 219-230.

We do this by taking a brief sampling of some of the prophecies which were recorded in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New, and attempt to examine them quantitatively. In other words, this will be an exercise in composite probabilities. You will see what we mean as we begin. But first we must make another introductory detour, as we anticipate the criticisms of the skeptics who will claim that none of this matters unless the prophecies were provably written well prior to the supposed fulfillments they anticipate. We completely agree, so before beginning to examine these prophecies, let’s establish our prophetic perspective by examining this issue...

The first point we must recognize is that the Old Testament was translated into Greek around 270 B.C. – called the Septuagint.

-<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Septuagint> (Retrieved 8/9/18)

In those days, even a Jew generally didn’t have much proficiency in Hebrew, but instead likely spoke Aramaic and Greek. Greek – following the spread of the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great – became the international language of commerce. Hebrew, instead, became similar to the way Latin is for a Catholic. The Jews of that time may have had some understanding of it for religious uses, but in general the average person would not have been skillful enough to read it fluently. This background established the need among Jews for a copy of the Scriptures readable in the common language.

-Missler, p. 220.

So, around 285 B.C., Ptolemy II Philadelphus commissioned around 72 of the most eminent Hebrew scholars to Alexandria to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. The result of that effort, as we mentioned, is known as the Septuagint version of the Old Testament (*ibid.*). The purpose of recognizing this for the sake of this study is simply to point out that the Old Testament prophecies were already in print several centuries before the birth of Christ – which establishes it as valid prophecy.

Another point of evidence that shows the Old Testament prophecies were in existence long before their fulfillments in Christ involves the incredible discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. This archaeological find included Biblical scrolls and fragments that contained at least some part of every Old Testament book, with the exception of Esther – with many of these dating to hundreds of years prior to the life of Christ.

-John Salvo, "Dead Sea Scrolls: Their History and Myths Revealed," New York: Metro Books, 2013, pp. 59 and 82.

If these manuscript copies of Old Testament books found in the Dead Sea Scrolls pre-dated Christ, then the original Old Testament books must have been written far earlier still. At any rate, no serious scholars doubt that the Old Testament – including its prophecies – pre-dated Christ.

The next objection we must anticipate goes as follows:

"The gospel authors deliberately crafted their biographies of Jesus so as to make Jesus appear to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures."

But there are several reasons to believe that the gospel authors reported Jesus' life and words accurately. They wrote the truth even at risk of persecution, and they did not play to what their audiences might expect. Let's take a few moments to break this down further...

In their book "Evidence That Demands A Verdict," Josh and Sean McDowell make the following points:

- At the time the Gospels were written, the Christian church was undergoing considerable persecution. Many Christians were martyred for their faith in excruciating and inhumane ways – such as by crucifixion, being burned alive, and being fed to wild animals. Since the gospel writers had nothing obvious to gain from inventing a “new religion,” and everything to lose, this suggests they recorded what actually happened and what Jesus really said and did.
- The Gospels demonstrate restraint on the part of their writers, since Jesus is conspicuously silent on many of the controversial topics that were debated in the early church – including whether Gentile Christians had to undergo circumcision, the role of women, etc. If the gospel writers were in the habit of making things up, it seems likely that they would have “made” Jesus “address” such issues.
- Maybe one of the most important pieces of evidence to consider is the fact that Jesus' Messianic claim flew in the face of the overwhelming Jewish Messianic anticipation that was prevalent during His earthly ministry. In other words, during that period, the Jewish understanding of the Messianic prophecies emphasized a coming king

or political leader that would help them throw off the yoke of their Roman oppressors. Even today, this same type of anticipation stands – based on the many Old Testament Messianic Scriptures that do depict the Messiah as a conquering king who will restore the earthly kingdom of Israel and reign as an earthly monarch on David’s throne.

Christians on the other hand, understand that these prophecies will be fulfilled at Christ’s Second Coming – where Christ will come as a Conquering King. But Christians also understand that at His First Coming, Christ came as the Suffering Servant – fulfilling the many Messianic prophecies that point to the Messiah’s torment, anguish, pain, and death. Where are we going with this?

Simply that, if the New Testament writers’ motivation was to persuade people who were longing for – and expecting – a conquering hero Messiah, they could have omitted or downplayed the crucifixion and struggles of Jesus in order to craft a more convincing presentation. They could have portrayed Him as a powerful political leader seeking to overthrow Rome. But they didn’t. Since they instead gave the crucifixion emphasis – and never once gave any indication that Jesus sought the type of political power the Jews were expecting, it shows that they gave a truthful account, and in doing so, they revealed in a far deeper way the saving role of the Messiah.

-Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, “Evidence That Demands A Verdict,” updated and expanded version, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017, pp. 208-209.

In summary, the gospel authors passed every test of validity that we would ascribe to any modern writer in any objective test. They – in every way – had every reason to write the opposite of what they actually wrote. Every

one of them – except John – died horrific and gruesome deaths directly due to their advocacy of the truth of their testimonies of Jesus. They all faced excommunication from everything they knew in the Jewish culture and religion of that day – all due to their testimonies about Jesus. They all stood to lose everything – and they all pretty much did – due to their testimonies about Jesus.

Furthermore, authors Norman Geisler and Frank Turek identify ten reasons why we should believe that the gospel writers told the truth. Here are just several:

- The New Testament writers included embarrassing details about themselves.

Writers – especially fraudulent ones – tend to embellish their own importance and cover up embarrassing details that may make them look bad.

For example:

-They are dim-witted (Mark 9:32, Luke 18:34, John 12:16).

-They are rebuked strongly (Mark 8:33, et al.).

-They are cowards (Matthew 26:33-35, et al.).

-They are doubters (John 2:18-22, 3:14-18, Matthew 12:39-41, 17:9, 22-23, 28:17).

- The New Testament writers included embarrassing details and difficult sayings of Jesus.

So, they not only included self-incriminating details about themselves, but also record details about their leader – Jesus – that would seem to portray Him in a negative light.

For example:

-Jesus is initially considered “out of His mind” by His own family (Mark 3:21, 31).

-Jesus is initially not believed by His own brothers (John 7:5).

-Jesus is thought by some to be a deceiver (John 7:12).

-Jesus is deserted by many of His followers (John 6:66).

-Jesus is called a “drunkard” (Matthew 11:19).

-Jesus is called “demon-possessed” (Mark 3:22, et al.).

-Jesus is called a “madman” (John 10:20).

-Jesus is crucified by the Romans, despite the fact that “anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (All four Gospels, Deuteronomy 21:23, cf. Galatians 3:13).

- The New Testament writers included events related to the resurrection of Christ that they would not have invented.

For example:

-Women (in a very male dominated society and time) were recorded as being the first ones to reach the empty tomb after the resurrection.

-A woman's testimony carried little to no weight in courts of law during that time, yet it was women who first testified of the empty tomb.

-Women were often depicted as being the brave ones, standing near the cross, while the disciples were in hiding for fear of the Jews .

- The New Testament writers were stoned, beheaded, thrown in boiling oil, crucified upside down, and killed in a number of ways for their eyewitness testimony.

They abandoned their long-held beliefs and sacred practices (practically overnight) and adopted new radical ones all under penalty of death. They could have saved their lives by recanting, but they went to the death for their eyewitness testimonies.

What about for instance, Muslim terrorists willing to die for their beliefs? There is one big difference – the New Testament writers were eyewitnesses. They knew it was the truth because they had verified it with their own senses. While current martyrs are certainly sincere,

they don't have eyewitness proof that their beliefs are true, and therefore their deaths are critically different.

-Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, "I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist," Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004, Ch. II.

So then, throughout this introductory section, we have established two key points: that the prophecies we will be examining were written well before the fact, and that we have reason to believe in the validity of the gospel writers' accounts of Jesus' life. There is certainly much more information available to prove those two points, which we certainly encourage you to explore. But at this point, we should have sufficiently countered the potential objections of the critics, and will now continue on with our study.

So then, with that background in place, let's review several of these Old Testament Messianic prophecies and attempt to estimate the likelihoods that they were just mere coincidence or accidents of chance.

Eight Prophetic Probabilities

Messianism in the Old Testament is the anticipation of the prophesied coming leader who will save, liberate, and redeem Israel. One scholar, J. Barton Payne, found as many as 574 verses in the Old Testament that somehow point to, describe, or reference the coming Messiah. Alfred Edersheim found 456 Old Testament verses prophetically referring to the Messiah or His times. Conservatively, Jesus fulfilled at least 300 of these prophecies in His earthly ministry, according to theologians who have catalogued them.

-<https://www.gotquestions.org/prophecies-of-Jesus.html> (Retrieved 10/11/20)

For the sake of this example, we have selected only 8 of the 300. The New Testament gospels, the historical records of the life of Jesus, record specific fulfillments to these prophecies as attested to by numerous witnesses. We will examine each of these 8, and if legitimate, we will then mathematically apply them to an exercise in calculating composite probabilities.

By analyzing the circumstances surrounding each one, you can come up with an estimated probability of each one taking place by assigning an approximated numerical value to its probability. The chance that a single person could fulfill all 8 is an exercise in what is termed composite probabilities. Bear in mind, all of the following probability estimates are extremely conservative!

1. “Born in Bethlehem”

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

-Micah 5:2

This is the passage King Herod resorted to in order to respond to the inquiry of the Magi, who had asked, “Where is he that is born king of the Jews?” This prophetic passage specifies that the Coming One will be born in Bethlehem. The gospels of Matthew and Luke both record the birth of Jesus, and agree that He was born in Bethlehem.

What then can we say is the likelihood that any Jew - from the time of Micah until the present - has been born in Bethlehem?

Would you agree that an extremely conservative estimate would be one in 100,000?

Probability: 1:100,000

2. “Death by Crucifixion”

“For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.”

-Psalm 22:16

Psalm 22 reads as if it were dictated – first person singular – by Christ Himself as He hung on the cross. Although this passage was penned around eight centuries years before He was born (ibid., p. 225)!

What makes this even more incredible is that the official form of execution in Israel (coming from the Mosaic Law) was always stoning, nothing else. If you were predicting how some future person would die in ancient Israel, you would choose stoning, not crucifixion (which at the time of the writing of Psalms, probably wasn't even invented yet, but definitely was not common practice – especially in Israel (*ibid.*). Of course, all four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), agree that Jesus was crucified.

So then, what is the ratio of Jewish men, taken at random, to have died by crucifixion? We will assign an extremely conservative estimate of one in 10,000.

Probability: 1:10,000

3. “Hailed as a King Riding a Donkey”

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” -Zechariah 9:9

This prophecy announces that the Coming One will present Himself as King by riding a donkey into Jerusalem. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all agree that Jesus entered Jerusalem while being hailed as a King, riding on a donkey.

Since this prophecy, one man in how many - who has entered Jerusalem as a ruler - has entered riding on a donkey? While we have

no record of anyone but Christ who did so, let us allow for unrecorded possibilities and assign an estimate of one in 100 – again, an extremely conservative estimate.

Probability: 1:100

4. “Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver”

“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.”

-Zechariah 11:12

Matthew 26:15 records that this was the exact amount Judas received for his betrayal of Jesus Christ.

This one seems simple enough: Of all the Jewish men who have ever lived since this prophecy, one in how many has been betrayed or sold for exactly 30 pieces of silver? Although this seems like a “one in a million” kind of thing, let’s assign an extremely conservative estimate of one in 1,000.

Probability: 1:1,000

5. “Transaction Took Place in the Temple/Silver to the Potter”

“And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.”

-Zechariah 11:13

This prophecy is extremely specific. It describes not only the amount of the transaction (30 pieces of silver), but also the location of the transaction (the house of the Lord, the Temple), and who ends up with the money (a potter).

Matthew 27 records that Judas, in his remorse, attempted to undo his bargain and return the 30 pieces of silver, but the priests would not accept them, so he threw them down on the floor of the Temple and went out and hanged himself. The priests could not put the money into the treasury as there was a prohibition against the use of “blood money.” To avoid this, they found a different use for the money. The Temple was responsible to bury any foreigners who might die in their precincts, so they purchased an available potter’s field for that purpose.

We now need to estimate a probability of all of this being fulfilled. One Jewish man in how many – since this prophecy - after receiving a bribe for a betrayal, attempted to return the money, had it refused, threw it on the floor of the Temple, and then had it ultimately end up in the hands of a potter? This is also a “one in a million” situation, but let’s assign an extremely conservative estimate of one in 100,000.

Probability: 1:100,000

6. “Wounded in His Hands in the House of His Friends”

“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” -Zechariah 13:6

When first reading this verse, it may seem difficult to visualize a group of Roman soldiers crucifying Jesus, as being “in the house of my friends.” However, you may recall an event recorded in John 20:25, in which after His resurrection, Jesus first appeared to the disciples. On this occasion, Thomas was not present. When the disciples later told Thomas of the resurrected Christ’s visit, Thomas said,

“Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” -John 20:25

Eight days later, when they were all assembled again – but this time, including Thomas – Jesus again appeared and gave Thomas the opportunity to fulfill his request.

Now, when we go back and review the prophetic glimpse given to us by Zechariah, we realize it wasn’t the nails that are the wounds being referred to, but Thomas’ unbelief as he stuck his fingers into Jesus’ freshly crucified hands. Ouch!

So, we need to assign an estimate. How many Jewish men since this prophecy have been wounded in both hands while in the house of their friends? Let’s assign an extremely conservative estimate of one in 1,000.

Probability: 1:1,000

7. “Made No Defense Though Innocent”

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

-Isaiah 53:7

All four gospels record some aspects of Jesus’ arrest and overnight trials prior to His crucifixion. After His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was subjected to six trials: three Jewish and three Roman – all of them illegal in every respect.

-John W. Lawrence, “The Six Trials of Jesus,” Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1977.

Finally, after attempting every administrative ploy available, and pronouncing Him “without fault,” Pilate nevertheless sentenced him to be executed.

Let’s assign an estimate. Since this prophecy, one Jewish man in how many – while on trial for his life – and though innocent – will make no defense for himself? We will assign an extremely conservative estimate of one in 1,000.

Note: Many wonder why Jesus made no defense. He couldn’t! He was in our shoes! His mission was to be our substitute, and we are guilty!

Probability: 1:1,000

8. “Died With the Wicked, Grave With the Rich”

“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” -Isaiah 53:9

Jesus was crucified between two thieves and buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, who was apparently one of the richest and most influential individuals in the region. He was somehow able to secure a personal secret meeting with Pilate in order to request the body of Jesus, which indicates his stature.

So then, one in how many Jewish men since this prophecy died among the wicked yet were buried with the rich? While this one could have some definite candidates, let's assign a probability of one in 1,000, if for no other reason than the unlikelihood of the average person taken at random being “buried with the rich.”

Probability: 1:1,000

Before going on, let's further clarify what we mean by these probability estimates. A helpful way of doing this is to try to visualize what we mean by using a physical example...

“1:100” - A suitable example would be taking 100 silver dollars, marking one, and putting them all into a bucket, mixed. You would then reach into the bucket blindfolded and your chances of randomly selecting the marked coin would be 1 in 100 chances.

The Probability Of One Man Fulfilling All Eight Prophecies

Our next challenge is to estimate the probability that one single individual could fulfill all 8 of these prophecies. We need to combine these 8 separate estimates into a composite probability. In mathematics, to determine composite (or compound) probabilities (the chance of all of the events occurring), you calculate the product of each individual probability. In other words, you multiply the probabilities. (e.g. $1:1,000 \times 1:1,000 = 1:1,000,000$)

-Missler, pp. 225-226.

So, let's now apply that to our current exercise. In order to calculate the composite probability of all 8 Messianic prophecies being fulfilled by a single person, you would take the product of the 8 assigned probability estimates.

Consider the following chart...

Eight Prophetic Probabilities

(out of over 300 OT prophecies, all fulfilled by Christ)

Prophecies:	Probabilities:
1. Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)	1:100,000
2. Death by Crucifixion (Psalm 22:16)	1:10,000
3. Hailed as a King Riding a Donkey (Zechariah 9:9)	1:100
4. Betrayed for 30 Pieces of Silver (Zechariah 11:12)	1:1,000
5. Transaction Took Place in the Temple / Silver to the Potter (Zech. 11:13)	1:100,000
6. Wounded in His Hands in the House of His Friends (Zechariah 13:6)	1:1,000
7. Made No Defense Though Innocent (Isaiah 53:7)	1:1,000
8. Died With the Wicked, Grave With the Rich (Isaiah 53:9)	1:1,000

The probability that one man would fulfill all eight →

$$10^5 \times 10^4 \times 10^2 \times 10^3 \times 10^5 \times 10^3 \times 10^3 \times 10^3 = 10^{28}$$

/ 8.8×10^{10} (the estimated number of people who have lived between the time these prophecies were given, until now)

$$= 1 \text{ chance in } 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 \text{ (} 10^{17} \text{)}$$

Or: $10^5 \times 10^4 \times 10^2 \times 10^3 \times 10^5 \times 10^3 \times 10^3 \times 10^3 = 10^{28}$

(An easy way to come up with the product of this column of numbers is simply to count the 0's.)

After doing the arithmetic, the composite probability that a single person would fulfill all 8 prophecies turns out to be an enormous number: 1:10²⁸ (that is, 1:10 with 28 zeroes after it, or 1:100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000).

This fulfills the question of one man in how many men could have fulfilled these 8 prophecies. But what we really want to know is, what is the chance that any particular man might have lived – beginning from the time these

prophecies were given, up until the present time – and have fulfilled all of these specific prophecies? To estimate this, we then have to divide our 10^{28} by the total population of the people who have lived during this time period.

The estimate of the number of people who have lived during this time period is thought to be approximately 8.8 billion, or 8.8×10^{10} (*ibid.*, p. 226.). We will simplify this calculation by rounding up to 10^{11} . The chance of one actual person in history fulfilling all 8 prophecies is 10^{28} divided by 10^{11} , which equals 10^{17} or 1:1,000,000,000,000,000,000 – still an astronomically huge number.

Let's try to visualize the size of this likelihood which is represented by $1:10^{17}$. If we took the entire state of Texas and filled it completely with 10^{17} silver dollars, the depth of silver dollars on the ground would equal two feet anywhere you walk (*ibid.*, p. 227.). You would then mark one of the silver dollars at random, and the chances of a person blindfolded being dropped anywhere in Texas and picking up the marked silver dollar would be equivalent to 1 chance in 10^{17} .

It would be completely irrational to imagine this could happen by chance. And keep in mind, this figure only includes 8 of over 300 Old Testament Messianic prophecies!

The Probability Of One Man Fulfilling Sixteen Prophecies

Now let's say we want to expand our exercise to include 16 of the available 300 prophecies instead of just 8. To simplify our analysis, let's assume that the likelihoods of the 8 we are adding are essentially the same as the first 8.

If you apply the same arithmetic, the chance of one man fulfilling all 16 prophecies comes to 1:10⁴⁵!

$$(10^{28} \times 10^{28} / 10^{11} = 10^{45})$$

Well how big of a number is this? Let's come up with another imaginary model to help us appreciate the largeness of the number 10⁴⁵.

Again, we will use silver dollars as an example, but this time Texas isn't big enough to accommodate 10⁴⁵ – in fact, the entire United States isn't big enough. Instead, to represent 10⁴⁵ silver dollars, we'll need to make a ball of silver dollars with a diameter 60 times the distance from Earth to the sun

(*ibid.*, p. 228.)!

We now need to mark one of the silver dollars at random, and then mix them up so as to give every silver dollar an equal chance of being selected. We will then commission a blindfolded astronaut, launch him into this ball of silver dollars, and have him select one at random. The chance that he successfully picks the marked silver dollar is the same chance that the Messiah had in fulfilling each of the 16 prophecies.

But again, we have only utilized 16 of over 300 prophecies we can pick from. Let's try this exercise once more. This time, we will explore three times as many, a total of 48 prophecies.

The Probability Of One Man Fulfilling Forty-Eight Prophecies

We will now increase our calculation to include 48 Messianic prophecies. As before, we will assume that none of these additional prophecies are any more specific than the original 8. In other words, we will assume each of the likelihoods are the same as the first 8.

If you apply the same arithmetic, the chance of one man fulfilling all 48 prophecies comes to 1:10¹⁵⁷!

$$(10^{28} \times 10^{28} \times 10^{28} \times 10^{28} \times 10^{28} \times 10^{28} / 10^{11} = 10^{157})$$

Our problem now simply becomes comprehending the largeness of the numbers we are encountering. 10¹⁵⁷ is such a large number that silver dollars will no longer work for this example. In fact, it is difficult to even imagine a model we can relate to that will accommodate an example of such a large number. That being said, let's try to come up with some way to dramatize this likelihood.

To do this, we will need to assemble a ball composed of the smallest things we can imagine: atoms. This ball will be composed of every single atom in the entire universe. It may surprise you to discover that the widely accepted guess by scientists regarding the total number of atoms in the universe is "only" 10⁶⁶ (ibid.). That should give you a clue as to the largeness of these numbers. And still, we are still nowhere near our necessary amount of 10¹⁵⁷.

In order then to accommodate this, we will need to make a ball of all the atoms in the universe for each atom in the universe. When we do the arithmetic, we come up with 10¹⁵².

$$(10^{66} \times 10^{66} = 10^{132})$$

We are still a long way from the necessary figure of 10^{157} !

In order to reach our goal, we will need to perform this same exercise once for every second since the secular estimation of when the universe began. Assuming about ten billion years for the purposes of our model, that's equivalent to about 10^{17} seconds. When we do the arithmetic, we are still only to 10^{149} .

$$(10^{132} \times 10^{17} = 10^{149})$$

As you can see, we are still short of our goal by 10^8 . In other words, we will still have to perform this exercise 100 million times more in order to reach our desired sample size of 10^{157} ! Once we do that, we need to "mark an atom" and select one at random (1: 10^{157}).

As you can see, this is absolutely beyond human imagining. We have literally run out of quantitative ways to assimilate this degree of magnitude. And remember, we have only dealt with 48 of over 300 specific Messianic prophecies!

Conclusion

What's the point of all of this?

We have 300 authentic Old Testament prophecies that are proven to have been written before the time of Christ (by among other evidences, the completion of the Septuagint several centuries B.C.). We then find that in the New Testament, there are multiple eyewitness accounts thoroughly documenting Christ's literal fulfillment of these Old Testament prophecies. But here's the point, which we will summarize in two separate insights...

1. To attribute the fulfillment of all the specific Messianic prophecies by Jesus Christ to the coincidental actions of unaided chance alone is absurd.
2. You can demonstrate mathematically that you can be more certain that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel than you are of basically any other fact in the history of the universe. And you have quantitative data to prove it.

So, as we conclude, we need to recognize that the fact that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of prophecy can be established with overwhelming certainty. This recognition acts as definitive proof of the extraterrestrial source of the Bible – a source beyond our space-time – a proof so large that the universe itself is not able to hold the evidence! To reject the supernatural origin, ministry, and destiny of Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel – and everything that He accomplished in His First Coming – is to reject a fact established, perhaps more absolutely, than any other fact in the world.

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