

Sunday, March 6, 2016—Grace Life School of Theology—*From This Generation For Ever*
 Lesson 23 Internal Evidence of Inspiration: Fulfilled Prophecy

Introduction

- Last week in Lesson 22 we continued our consideration of the internal evidence of inspiration by looking at Undesigned Coincidences between the book of Acts and the Pauline epistles.
- In Lesson 21 I said that we would be looking at two primary categories of internal evidence for the Bible's inspiration: 1) Undesigned Coincidences, and 2) fulfilled prophecy. Having completed our cursory study (much more could be said) of Undesigned Coincidences we are now ready to turn our attention to a consideration of fulfilled prophecy.

Our Prophetic God

- Fulfilled prophecies give clear attestation to the hand of God in human history and are some of the most important evidences we have for the divine origin and inspiration of the Bible. The Bible is the only religious document in existence that provides more than two thousand prophecies that validate its historical claims. Biblical prophecy deals with everything from the Lord Jesus Christ, the nation Israel, Gentile nations (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome), cities (Tyre), and people (Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus). (Story, 37)
- Other religions have, of course, made prophetic claims, but in no other religion in the world has prophecy been fulfilled so completely and so accurately as what is recorded in the Bible.
- Many believe that the issue of fulfilled prophecy is the single greatest Divine apologetic.
- Isaiah 46:9-10—Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, 10) **Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things that are not yet done*, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:**
 - God almighty has the capacity to declare from the beginning the things “not yet done.” God’s ability to do this stems from the fact that, as God, He knows the “end from the beginning.” Whatever, God declares “shall stand” i.e., it will come to pass.
- Numbers 23:19—**God is not a man, that he should lie**; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?
 - If God would be wrong about something, He declared in advance He would not be God. What makes God God is the fact that He knows the end from the beginning and cannot lie or be wrong about anything He declares. God’s knowledge is infinite and His word cannot be broken (John 10:35).

- Isaiah 48:3, 5—**I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass. . . 5)** I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I shewed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.
 - God’s ability to predict an event in advance and have it come to pass as it was foretold is what sets God apart from the man made gods of the Gentiles. Furthermore, not only does God possess the capacity to declare the end from the beginning, He had the audacity to set forth His predictions in writing. The issue of fulfilled prophecy is not only one of the greatest proofs for the existence of God, it is also serves as strong internal evidence for inspiration.
- Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:20-22—God issues strong decrees concerning the use or misuse of prophecy and the identification of true and false prophets. God instructed Israel to put to death anyone who prophesied on any authority other than God’s—even if his prophecy came to pass. Moreover, if a prophecy did not come to pass, even if it was spoken in the name of the Lord, that person was to be put to death as a false prophet. (Story, 37)

Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Christ

- “The Old Testament, written over a one-thousand-year period, contains nearly three hundred references to the coming Messiah.” (McDowell, 164) The fact that all three hundred of these prophesies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ establishes solid internal conformation of inspiration.
- Not only was the Old Testament written over a 1,000 year time span but it was also completed at least 250 years before the advent of Christ. According to the traditional view of the Septuagint (which I am not necessarily endorsing), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament dates its origin to about 250 B.C. When one considers that a complete Hebrew Old Testament must have predated its translation into Greek, the date for the completion of the Old Testament is pushed back even further into antiquity. 450 B.C. is the date accepted by most conservative scholars for the completion of the Old Testament. Therefore, suffice it to say that there was at least a 400 year gap (many times longer) between the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah and their fulfilment in the advent of Christ.
- In his book *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell catalogues 61 Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ during his first advent. Time and space will not permit an exhaustive investigation of all 61 prophecies in this lesson. Interested parties are encouraged to obtain a copy of McDowell’s book and look at pages 168 through 192.
- For our purposes we will consider the following ten prophetic utterances fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Born At Bethlehem

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|--|--|
| Micah 5:2—But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, <i>though</i> thou be little among the thousands of Judah, <i>yet</i> out of thee shall he come forth unto me <i>that is</i> to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth <i>have been</i> from of old, from everlasting. | Matthew 2:1—Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Also see Luke 2:4-7 & John 7:42 |

- God eliminated all the cities of the world, save one, for the entrance of his Son into the world. Jesus was born in precisely the place that the prophet predicted.

Preceded By a Messenger

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|--|---|
| Isaiah 40:3—The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Also see Malachi 3:1 | Matthew 3:1-3—In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2) And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3) For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Also see Luke 1:17 & John 1:23 |

- John the Baptist was the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3 according to the Matthew, Luke, and John.

Entrance into Jerusalem on a Donkey

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|---|--|
| Zechariah 9:9—Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he <i>is</i> just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. | Luke 19:35-37—And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36) And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37) And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Also see Matt. 21:6-7 |

Betrayed By a Friend

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|---|--|
| Psalm 41:9—Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up <i>his</i> heel against me. Also see Psalm 55:12-14 | Matthew 10:4—Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. Also see Matt. 26:49-50 & John 13:21 |

Betrayed for Thirty Pieces of Silver

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|--|--|
| Zechariah 11:12—And I said unto them, If ye think good, give <i>me</i> my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty <i>pieces</i> of silver. | Matthew 26:15—And said <i>unto them</i> , What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. |

Silver to be thrown in the House of the LORD

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|---|---|
| Zechariah 11:13—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 <i>pieces</i> of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD. | Mathew 27:5—And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. |

Silver Used to Purchase the Potter's Field

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|--|---|
| Zechariah 11:13— 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 <i>pieces</i> of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD. | Matthew 27:7— And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. |

Silent before His Accusers

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|---|--|
| Isaiah 53:7— 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 | Matthew 27:12— And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. |

Hands and Feet Pierced

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|---|---|
| Psalm 22:16—For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. Also see Zech. 12:10 | John 20:25—The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, 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. Also see Luke 23:33 |

- Here we see the Roman manner of exaction foretold before the Roman Empire even existed.

Numbered With the Transgressors

| Prophecy | Fulfillment |
|---|---|
| Isaiah 53:12— Therefore will I divide him <i>a portion</i> with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. | Mathew 27:38— Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. Also see Mark 15:27-28 |

Fulfilled Prophecy and the Life of Jesus: Engineered or Lucky?

- In the face of the internal evidence of inspiration provided by fulfilled prophecy, skeptics and critics have tried to rescue their enterprise arguing either one of the following in respect to the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies.
 - Engineered Fulfillment
 - Accidental Fulfillment

Engineered Fulfillment

- In 1965, radical New Testament scholar H.J. Schonfield wrote a book titled *The Passover Plot* in which he argued that Jesus was a messianic pretender who conspired to fulfill prophecy in order to substantiate His claims. There are several lines of argumentation that demonstrate the implausibility of Schonfield's thesis:
 - “There is no way that Jesus could have controlled many events necessary for the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. For example, He could not control where He was born (Mic. 5:2), how He would be born of a virgin (Is. 7:14), when He would die (Dan. 9:25), what tribe (Gen. 49:10) and lineage He would be from (II Sam. 7:12), or other facts about His life that have corresponded to prophecy.

. . . there is no way short of being supernatural that Jesus could have manipulated the events and people in His life to respond in exactly the way necessary for it to appear that He was fulfilling all these prophecies, including John's heralding (Matt. 3), His accuser's reactions (Matt. 27:12), how the soldiers cast lots for His garments (John 19:23-24), and how they would pierce His side with a spear (John 19:34).

Indeed even Schonfield admits that the plot failed when the Romans actually pierced Christ. The fact is that anyone with all this power would have to be divine—the very thing the Passover hypothesis attempts to avoid. In short, it takes a bigger miracle to believe the *Passover Plot* than to accept these prophecies as supernatural.” (McDowell, 192-193)

- Belief that the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies was engineered by Christ during his earthly ministry would require belief in a greater supernatural act than simply believing in their organic fulfillment as recorded in the four gospels.

Accidental Fulfillment

- A second argument one might utilize to try and escape the internal evidence for inspiration provided by fulfilled prophecy is coincidence. In other words, Jesus fulfilled all 61 Old Testament prophecies conserving His first advent by accident and happenstance.
- In 1944 a book appeared by Peter Stoner titled [*Science Speaks*](#). Among other things, Stoner's work presented the mathematical probability of the ten prophetic statements we looked at above ever having been fulfilled in one person. The following is quotation from Stoner's book:
 - “. . . the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies (The same ten we looked at above. Stoner combined a few of them.) is 1 in 10^{17} .

Let us try to visualize this chance. If you mark one of ten tickets, and place all of the tickets in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten. Suppose that we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will 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 have 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 using their own wisdom.

Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets had just one chance in 10^{17} of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ.

This means that the fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one change in 10^{17} of being absolute.

. . . Sometimes we weigh our chances in the business world, and say if an investment has nine chances in ten of being profitable, and only one chance in ten of being a failure, it is safe enough for us to make the investment. Whoever heard of an investment that had only one chance in 10^{17} of failure? The business world has no conception of such an investment. Yet we are offered this investment by God. By the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Savior we know, from only these eight prophecies which lack only 1 chance in 10^{17} of being an absolute proof, that that investment will yield the wonderful dividend of eternal life with Christ. Can anyone be so unreasonable as to reject Jesus Christ and pin his hope of eternal life on such a slim chance as finding the right silver dollar among this great mass, covering the whole state of Texas two feet deep? It does not seem possible, yet every man who rejects Christ is doing just that.

More than three hundred prophecies from the Old Testament which deal with the first advent of Christ have been listed. Every one of them was completely fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Let us see what happens when we take more than eight prophecies.

Suppose we add eight more prophecies to our list, and assume that their chance of fulfillment is the same as the eight just considered. The chance that one man would fulfill all sixteen is $1 \times 10^{28} \times 10^{17}$ or 1 in 10^{45} .

Let us try to visualize this as we did before. Take this number of silver dollars. If you make these into a solid ball, you will have a great sphere with a center at the earth, and extending in all directions more than 30 times as far as from the earth to the sun. (If a train had started from the earth at the time the Declaration of Independence was signed, and had traveled steadily toward the sun at the rate of sixty miles per hour, day and night, it would be about reaching its destination today. But remember that our ball of silver dollars extends thirty times that far in all directions.) If you can imagine the marking of one silver dollar, and then thoroughly stirring it into this great ball, and blindfolding a man and telling him to pick out one dollar, and expect it to be the marked one, you have somewhat of a picture of how absolutely the fulfillment of sixteen prophecies referring to Jesus Christ proves both that He is the Son of God and that our Bible is inspired. Certainly God directed the writing of His Word.

In order to extend this consideration beyond all bounds of human comprehension, let us consider forty-eight prophecies, similar in their human chance of fulfillment to the eight which we originally considered, using a much more conservative number, 1 in 10^{21} . Applying the same principle of probability used so far, we find the chance that any one man fulfilled all forty-eight prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157} .

This is really a large number and it represents an extremely small chance. Let us try to visualize it. The silver dollar, which we have been using, is entirely too large. We must select a smaller object. The electron is about as small an object as we know of. It is so small that it will take 2.5×10^{15} of them laid side by side to make a line, single file, one inch long. If we were going to count the electrons in this line one inch long, and counted 250 each minute, and if we counted day and night, it would take us 19,000,000 years to count just the one-inch line of electrons. If we had a cubic inch of these electrons and we tried to count them, it would take us 1.2×10^{38} years (2×10^{28} times the 6 billion years back to the creation of the solar system).

With this introduction, let us go back to our chance of 1 in 10^{157} . Let us suppose that we are taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What chance has he of finding the right one? What kind of a pile will this number of electrons make? They make an inconceivably large volume.

. . . To the extent, then, that we know this blindfolded man cannot pick out the marked electron, we know that the Bible is inspired. This is not merely evidence. It is proof of the Bible's inspiration by God—proof so definite that the universe is not large enough to hold the evidence. Some will say that our estimates of the probability of the fulfillment of these prophecies are too large and the numbers should be reduced. Ask a man to submit his own estimates, and if they are smaller than these we have used, we shall add a few more prophecies to be evaluated and this same number will be reestablished or perhaps exceeded.

Our Bible students claim that there are more than three hundred prophecies dealing with Christ's first advent. If this number is correct, and it no doubt is, you could set your estimates ridiculously low on the whole three hundred prophecies and still obtain tremendous evidence of inspiration.

For example you may place all of your estimates at one in four. You may say that one man in four has been born in Bethlehem; that one of these children in four was taken to Egypt, to avoid slaughter; that one in four of these came back and made his home in Nazareth; that one in four of these was a carpenter; that one in four of these was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver; that one in four of these has been crucified on a cross; that one in four was then buried in a rich man's tomb; yes, even that one in four rose from the dead on the third day; and so on for all of the three hundred prophecies and from them I will build a number much larger than the one we obtained from the forty-eight prophecies.

Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world.” (Stoner, 100-110)

- The accidental fulfillment argument is just as ridiculous as the engineered fulfillment argument if not more so.

Conclusion

- The issue of fulfilled prophecy remains one of strongest apologetic arguments for the existence of God and internal evidences for the inspiration of scripture.

Works Cited

McDowell, Josh. *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999.

Stoner, Peter. [*Science Speaks*](#). Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1944.

Story, Dan. *Defending Your Faith: How to Answer the Tough Questions*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.