

# **“Your Answer About OT Prophecies of Jesus’ Resurrection Are Troubling”**

You responded to a question written by someone titled, [“Where are the OT Prophecies of Jesus’ Resurrection?”](#) Your answer is troubling. In Acts 13:32 God the Holy Spirit through Luke makes it expressly clear that He did prophesy in the OT regarding Christ’s resurrection. You answered that there are no prophecies in the OT about Jesus’ resurrection. Summed up: Your answer is in contradiction to Acts 13:32. Resolution?

I do (in fact) believe that there are OT predictions concerning the resurrection of Christ. The issue I was wrestling with in my response, however, is whether any of these predictions are “explicit” or “specific.” I state this quite clearly in my original letter:

“I do not think there are any specific predictions of Jesus’ resurrection in the OT.”

And although I could always be wrong, it doesn’t seem to me that the predictions are of this sort. It is only after His resurrection that we can clearly see that these passages were intended to refer to the resurrection of Christ. Prior to this, however, it does not seem to me that it was clear from the OT that the Messiah would be raised from the dead. This is certainly not something that the Jews of Jesus’ day (including Jesus’ own disciples) were expecting. This is quite clear, I think, if you look at those passages in which Jesus predicts His resurrection to His own disciples (e.g. Mark 8:31-32; 9:30-32; etc.). Indeed, the apostle John tells us quite explicitly that he did not believe until he saw some evidence of Jesus’ resurrection. And (speaking for himself and the other disciples) he specifically tells us why:

“For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9).

In other words, \_\_\_\_\_, in spite of all the OT prophetic evidence AND Jesus’ repeated predictions that He would rise from the dead after being crucified, the disciples did not understand any of it. It was still not clear to them. They were not expecting the death and resurrection of their Messiah and they were initially quite surprised by it all.

So while I agree that there are OT predictions of the resurrection of Christ, I just don’t see that these predictions are explicit in the sense of telling us directly, “The Messiah will be raised from the dead,” etc. Of course, if you can point one out to me that is explicit in this sense, I would be very grateful.

So it seems to me that the resolution to your difficulty, \_\_\_\_\_, is to read your sources a bit more carefully in the future.

Shalom,

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Probe Ministries

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## The Dead Sea Scrolls Shed

# Light on the Accuracy of our Bible

*Dr. Patrick Zukeran reviews the discovery of and important historical findings from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The texts discovered provide clear evidence as to the accuracy of our version of the Old Testament and the care with which it was preserved.*

## The Story of the Scrolls

Worship at the sacred Jerusalem Temple had become corrupt, with seemingly little hope for reform. A group of devoted Jews removed themselves from the mainstream and began a monastic life in the Judean desert. Their studies of the Old Testament Scriptures led them to believe that God's judgment upon Jerusalem was imminent and that the anointed one would return to restore the nation of Israel and purify their worship. Anticipating this moment, the Essenes retreated into the Qumran desert to await the return of their Messiah. This community, which began in the third century B.C., devoted their days to the study and copying of sacred Scripture as well as theological and sectarian works.

As tensions between the Jews and Romans increased, the community hid their valuable scrolls in caves along the Dead Sea to protect them from the invading armies. Their hope was that one day the scrolls would be retrieved and restored to the nation of Israel. In A.D. 70, the Roman general Titus invaded Israel and destroyed the city of Jerusalem along with its treasured Temple. It is at this time that the Qumran community was overrun and occupied by the Roman army. The scrolls remained hidden for the next two thousand years.

In 1947, a Bedouin shepherd named Muhammad (Ahmed el-Dhib) was searching for his lost goat and came upon a small opening of a

cave. Thinking that his goat may have fallen into the cave, he threw rocks into the opening. Instead of hearing a startled goat, he heard the shattering of clay pottery. Lowering himself into the cave, he discovered several sealed jars. He opened them hoping to find treasure. To his disappointment, he found them to contain leather scrolls. He collected seven of the best scrolls and left the other fragments scattered on the ground.

Muhammad eventually brought some of the scrolls to a cobbler and antiquities dealer in Bethlehem named Khando. Khando, thinking the scrolls were written in Syriac, brought them to a Syrian Orthodox Archbishop named Mar (Athanasius) Samuel. Mar Samuel recognized that the scrolls were written in Hebrew and suspected they may be very ancient and valuable. He eventually had the scrolls examined by John Trevor at the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR). Trevor contacted the world's foremost Middle East archaeologist, Dr. William Albright, and together these men confirmed the antiquity of the scrolls and dated them to sometime between the first and second century B.C.

After the initial discovery, archaeologists searched other nearby caves between 1952 and 1956. They found ten other caves that contained thousands of ancient documents as well. One of the greatest treasures of ancient manuscripts had been discovered: the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## **Date and Contents of the Scrolls**

Scholars were anxious to confirm that these Dead Sea Scrolls were the most ancient of all Old Testament manuscripts in the Hebrew language. Three types of dating tools were used: tools from archaeology, from the study of ancient languages, called paleography and orthography, and the carbon-14 dating method. Each can derive accurate results. When all the methods arrive at the same conclusion, there is an increased reliability in the dating.

Archaeologists studied the pottery, coins, graves, and garments at Khirbet Qumran, where the Essenes lived. They arrived at a date ranging from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D. Paleographers studied the style of writing and arrived at dates ranging from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. Scientists, using the radiocarbon dating method, dated the scrolls to range from the fourth century B.C. to the first century A.D. Since all the methods came to a similar conclusion, scholars are very confident in their assigned date for the texts. The scrolls date as early as the third century B.C. to the first century A.D.{1}

Eleven caves were discovered containing nearly 1,100 ancient documents which included several scrolls and more than 100,000 fragments.{2} Fragments from every Old Testament book except for the book of Esther were discovered. Other works included apocryphal books, commentaries, manuals of discipline for the Qumran community, and theological texts. The majority of the texts were written in the Hebrew language, but there were also manuscripts written in Aramaic and Greek.{3}

Among the eleven caves, Cave 1, which was excavated in 1949, and Cave 4, excavated in 1952, proved to be the most productive caves. One of the most significant discoveries was a well-preserved scroll of the entire book of Isaiah.

The famous Copper Scrolls were discovered in Cave 3 in 1952. Unlike most of the scrolls that were written on leather or parchment, these were written on copper and provided directions to sixty-four sites around Jerusalem that were said to contain hidden treasure. So far, no treasure has been found at the sites that have been investigated.

The oldest known piece of biblical Hebrew is a fragment from the book of Samuel discovered in Cave 4, and is dated from the third century B.C.{4} The War Scroll found in Caves 1 and 4 is an eschatological text describing a forty-year war between the Sons of Light and the evil Sons of Darkness. The Temple Scroll

discovered in Cave 11 is the largest and describes a future Temple in Jerusalem that will be built at the end of the age.

Indeed, these were the most ancient Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament ever found, and their contents would yield valuable insights to our understanding of Judaism and early Christianity.

## **The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic Text**

The Dead Sea Scrolls play a crucial role in assessing the accurate preservation of the Old Testament. With its hundreds of manuscripts from every book except Esther, detailed comparisons can be made with more recent texts.

The Old Testament that we use today is translated from what is called the Masoretic Text. The Masoretes were Jewish scholars who between A.D. 500 and 950 gave the Old Testament the form that we use today. Until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947, the oldest Hebrew text of the Old Testament was the Masoretic Aleppo Codex which dates to A.D. 935.[\[5\]](#)

With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we now had manuscripts that predated the Masoretic Text by about one thousand years. Scholars were anxious to see how the Dead Sea documents would match up with the Masoretic Text. If a significant amount of differences were found, we could conclude that our Old Testament Text had not been well preserved. Critics, along with religious groups such as Muslims and Mormons, often make the claim that the present day Old Testament has been corrupted and is not well preserved. According to these religious groups, this would explain the contradictions between the Old Testament and their religious teachings.

After years of careful study, it has been concluded that the Dead Sea Scrolls give substantial confirmation that our Old

Testament has been accurately preserved. The scrolls were found to be almost identical with the Masoretic text. Hebrew Scholar Millar Burrows writes, "It is a matter of wonder that through something like one thousand years the text underwent so little alteration. As I said in my first article on the scroll, 'Herein lies its chief importance, supporting the fidelity of the Masoretic tradition.'" {6}

A significant comparison study was conducted with the Isaiah Scroll written around 100 B.C. that was found among the Dead Sea documents and the book of Isaiah found in the Masoretic text. After much research, scholars found that the two texts were practically identical. Most variants were minor spelling differences, and none affected the meaning of the text.

One of the most respected Old Testament scholars, the late Gleason Archer, examined the two Isaiah scrolls found in Cave 1 and wrote, "Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (A.D. 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The five percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling." {7}

Despite the thousand year gap, scholars found the Masoretic Text and Dead Sea Scrolls to be nearly identical. The Dead Sea Scrolls provide valuable evidence that the Old Testament had been accurately and carefully preserved.

## **The Messianic Prophecies and the Scrolls**

One of the evidences used in defending the deity of the Christ is the testimony of prophecy. There are over one hundred prophecies regarding Christ in the Old Testament. {8} These prophecies were made centuries before the birth of Christ and were quite specific in their detail. Skeptics questioned the date of the prophecies and some even charged that they were

not recorded until after or at the time of Jesus, and therefore discounted their prophetic nature.

There is strong evidence that the Old Testament canon was completed by 450 B.C. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, is dated about two hundred fifty years before Christ. The translation process occurred during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus who ruled from 285 to 246 B.C.{9} It can be argued that a complete Hebrew text from which this Greek translation would be derived must have existed prior to the third century B.C.

The Dead Sea Scrolls provided further proof that the Old Testament canon existed prior to the third century B.C. Thousands of manuscript fragments from all the Old Testament books except Esther were found predating Christ's birth, and some date as early as the third century B.C. For example, portions from the book of Samuel date that early, and fragments from Daniel date to the second century B.C.{10} Portions from the twelve Minor Prophets date from 150 B.C to 25 B.C.{11} Since the documents were found to be identical with our Masoretic Text, we can be reasonably sure that our Old Testament is the same one that the Essenes were studying and working from.

One of the most important Dead Sea documents is the Isaiah Scroll. This twenty-four foot long scroll is well preserved and contains the complete book of Isaiah. The scroll is dated 100 B.C. and contains one of the clearest and most detailed prophecies of the Messiah in chapter fifty-three, called the "Suffering Servant." Although some Jewish scholars teach that this refers to Israel, a careful reading shows that this prophecy can only refer to Christ.

Here are just a few reasons. The suffering servant is called sinless (53:9), he dies and rises from the dead (53:8-10), and he suffers and dies for the sins of the people (53:4-6). These characteristics are not true of the nation of Israel. The



Isaiah Scroll gives us a manuscript that predates the birth of Christ by a century and contains many of the most important messianic prophecies about Jesus. Skeptics could no longer contend that portions of the book were written after Christ or that first century insertions were added to the text.

Thus, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide further proof that the Old Testament canon was completed by the third century B.C., and that the prophecies foretold of Christ in the Old Testament predated the birth of Christ.

## **The Messiah and the Scrolls**

What kind of Messiah was expected by first century Jews? Critical scholars allege that the idea of a personal Messiah was a later interpretation made by Christians. Instead, they believe that the Messiah was to be the nation of Israel and represented Jewish nationalism.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, written by Old Testament Jews, reveal the messianic expectations of Jews during the time of Christ. Studies have uncovered several parallels to the messianic hope revealed in the New Testament as well as some significant differences. First, they were expecting a personal Messiah rather than a nation or a sense of nationalism. Second, the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. Third, the Messiah would confirm His claims by performing miracles including the resurrection of the dead. Finally, He would be human and yet possess divine attributes.

A manuscript found in Cave 4 entitled the *Messianic Apocalypse*, copied in the first century B.C., describes the anticipated ministry of the Messiah:

For He will honor the pious upon the throne of His eternal kingdom, release the captives, open the eyes of the blind, lifting up those who are oppressed... For He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall raise the dead, He shall bring

good news to the poor.

This passage sounds very similar to the ministry of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. In Luke chapter 7:21-22, John the Baptist's disciples come to Jesus and ask him if He is the Messiah. Jesus responds, "Go tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news brought to them."

But, with the similarities there are also differences. Christians have always taught that there is one Messiah while the Essene community believed in two, one an Aaronic or priestly Messiah and the other a Davidic or royal Messiah who leads a war to end the evil age.[\[12\]](#)

The Essenes were also strict on matters of ceremonial purity while Jesus criticized these laws. He socialized with tax collectors and lepers which was considered defiling by the Jews. Jesus taught us to love one's enemies while the Essenes taught hatred towards theirs. They were strict Sabbatarians, and Jesus often violated this important aspect of the law. The Qumran community rejected the inclusion of women, Gentiles, and sinners, while Christ reached out to these very groups.

The many differences show that the Essenes were not the source of early Christianity as some scholars propose. Rather, Christianity derived its teachings from the Old Testament and the ministry of Jesus.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have proven to be a significant discovery, confirming the accurate preservation of our Old Testament text, the messianic prophecies of Christ, and valuable insight into first century Judaism.

## **Two Major Prophets and the Dead Sea**

# Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls have been an asset in the debate regarding two major and well disputed books of the Old Testament, Daniel and Isaiah. Conservative scholars maintained that Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C. as the author declares in the first chapter. The New Testament writers treated Daniel as a prophetic book with predictive prophecies. Liberal scholars began teaching in the eighteenth century that it was written in the Maccabean Period or the second century B.C. If they are correct, Daniel would not be a prophetic book that predicted the rise of Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Before the discovery of the scrolls, critical scholars argued that the Aramaic language used in Daniel was from a time no earlier than 167 B.C. during the Maccabean period. Other scholars, such as well-respected archaeologist Kenneth Kitchen, studied Daniel and found that ninety percent of Daniel's Aramaic vocabulary was used in documents from the fifth century B.C. or earlier.[\[13\]](#) The Dead Sea Scrolls revealed that Kitchen's conclusion was well founded. The Aramaic language used in the Dead Sea Scrolls proved to be very different from that found in the book of Daniel. Old Testament scholars have concluded that the Aramaic in Daniel is closer to the form used in the fourth and fifth century B.C. than to the second century B.C.

Critical scholars challenged the view that Isaiah was written by a single author. Many contended that the first thirty-nine chapters were written by one author in the eighth century B.C., and the final twenty-six chapters were written in the post-Exilic period. The reason for this is that there are some significant differences in the style and content between the two sections. If this were true, Isaiah's prophecies of Babylon in the later chapters would not have been predictive prophecies but written after the events occurred.

With the discovery of the Isaiah Scroll at Qumran, scholars on both sides were eager to see if the evidence would favor their position. The Isaiah Scroll revealed no break or demarcation between the two major sections of Isaiah. The scribe was not aware of any change in authorship or division of the book.[{14}](#) Ben Sira (second century B.C.), Josephus, and the New Testament writers regarded Isaiah as written by a single author and containing predictive prophecy.[{15}](#) The Dead Sea Scrolls added to the case for the unity and prophetic character of Isaiah.

## Inventory of the Scrolls

The following is a brief inventory provided by Dr. Gleason Archer of the discoveries made in each of the Dead Sea caves.[{16}](#)

Cave 1 was the first cave discovered and excavated in 1949. Among the discoveries was found the Isaiah Scroll containing a well-preserved scroll of the entire book of Isaiah. Fragments were found from the other Old Testament books which included Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Judges, Samuel, Ezekiel, and Psalms. Non-biblical books included the Book of Enoch, Sayings of Moses, Book of Jubilee, Book of Noah, Testament of Levi and the Wisdom of Solomon. Fragments from commentaries on Psalms, Micah, and Zephaniah were also discovered.

Cave 2 was excavated in 1952. Hundreds of fragments were discovered, including remains from the Old Testament books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Job, Psalms and Ruth.

Cave 3 was excavated in 1952. Here archaeologists found the famous Copper Scrolls. These scrolls contained directions to sixty-four sites containing hidden treasures located around Jerusalem. So far, no treasure has been found at the sites investigated.

Cave 4, excavated in 1952, proved to be one of the most productive. Thousands of fragments were recovered from nearly four hundred manuscripts. Hundreds of fragments from every Old Testament book were discovered with the exception of the Book of Esther. The fragment from Samuel labeled 4Qsam<sup>[17]</sup> is believed to be the oldest known piece of biblical Hebrew, dating from the third century B.C. Also found were fragments of commentaries on the Psalms, Isaiah, and Nahum. The entire collection of Cave 4 is believed to represent the scope of the Essene library.

Cave 5 was excavated in 1952 and fragments from some Old Testament books along with the book of Tobit were found.

Cave 6 excavated in 1952 uncovered papyrus fragments of Daniel, 1 and 2 Kings and some other Essene literature.

Caves 7-10 yielded finds of interest for archaeologists but had little relevance for biblical studies.

Cave 11 was excavated in 1956. It exposed well-preserved copies from some of the Psalms, including the apocryphal Psalm 151. In addition, a well-preserved scroll of part of Leviticus was found, and fragments of an Apocalypse of the New Jerusalem, an Aramaic Targum or paraphrase of Job, was also discovered.

Indeed these were the most ancient Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament ever found, and their contents would soon reveal insights that would impact Judaism and Christianity.

## Notes

1. James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco, CA.: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 20-32.
2. Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 278.
3. Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*

(Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 1985), 513-517.

4. Vanderkam and Flint, 115.

5. Price, 280.

6. Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking Press, 1955), 304, quoted in Norman Geisler and William Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 367.

7. Archer, 25.

8. J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 1984), 665-670.

9. Geisler and Nix, 503-504.

10. Ibid., 137.

11. Ibid., 138-139.

12. Vanderkam and Flint, 265-266.

13. Randall Price, *Secrets of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House, 1996), 162.

14. Ibid., 154-155.

15. Ibid., 156-157.

16. Archer, 513-517.

17. Price, 162.

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# **The Uniqueness of Jesus**

## **Liar, Lunatic, or Lord?**

A serious study of the Gospels leads a person to one of three conclusions about Jesus: He was (1) an evil lying villain, (2) a preposterously deluded madman, or (3) the Messiah, the Son of God. It is ludicrous for anyone who has studied His life to take the position that He was simply a good teacher. Only one of the three conclusions is a logical possibility.

Jesus made some outrageous claims no ordinary person would dare to make. First, He claimed to be God. His statements of equality with God meant He believed that He possessed the authority, attributes, and adoration belonging to God. He proclaimed authority over creation, forgiveness of sins, and life and death. He declared to possess the attributes of God. He emphatically stated that He was the source of truth and the only way to eternal life. Only Jesus among the significant leaders of history made such claims.

Here are a few of His outrageous claims. When "Philip said, Lord, show us the Father.' Jesus answered. . . .Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father'" (John 14:8-9). Once, when the Pharisees were disparaging Jesus and challenging Him, Jesus responded, " I and the Father are one.' Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus said to them, I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do

you stone me?' We are not stoning you for any of these,' replied the Jews, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God'" (John 10:30-33). It is clear in these two statements, Jesus claimed to be God. His opponents clearly understood His declaration of equality with God.

When challenged by the scholars on His authority over Abraham, the father of the Jews, Jesus replied, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.' The Jews said to Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham!' I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, before Abraham was born, I am!'" (John 8:56-58). Jesus clearly believed He had existed two thousand years earlier and knew Abraham.

On the issue of life and death Jesus stated, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25). Here He believed He had authority over life and death.

Finally, Jesus accepted and encouraged others to worship Him. Throughout the Gospels the disciples worshiped Jesus as seen in Matthew 14:33 and John 9:38. Jesus states in John 5:22-23, "Moreover, the Father judges no one but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him." Jesus knew the Old Testament command "Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only" (Matt. 4:10). Despite this, Jesus encouraged others to worship Him. Either He was mad (insane), or He was who He claimed to be and deserves our worship as God incarnate.

After reading such claims, it is impossible for anyone to say He was merely a good teacher. A man making claims like these must either be a diabolical liar, insane, or God incarnate. For the remainder of this essay we will be discussing which of these conclusions is most plausible.



## A Villain, A Madman, or God Incarnate?

We have established at this point that Jesus made some astounding claims about himself. He presumed to be God, claimed the authority and attributes of God, and encouraged others to worship Him as God. If, however, Jesus was a liar, then He knew His message was false but was willing to deceive thousands with claims He knew were untrue. That is, Jesus knew that He was not God, He did not know the way to eternal life, and He died and sent thousands to their deaths for a message He knew was a lie. This would make Jesus history's greatest villain (and perhaps, a demon) for teaching this wicked lie. He would have also been history's greatest fool for it was these claims that lead Him to His death.

Few, if any, seriously hold to this position. Even the skeptics unanimously agree that He was at least a great moral teacher. William Lecky, one of Britain's most respected historians and an opponent of Christianity writes, "It was reserved for Christianity to present the world an ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love." [\[1\]](#)

However, it would be inconsistent and illogical to believe that Jesus was a great moral teacher if some of those teachings contained immoral lies about himself. He would have to be a stupendous hypocrite to teach others honesty and virtue and all the while preach the lie that He was God. It is inconceivable to think that such deceitful, selfish, and depraved acts could have issued forth from the same being who otherwise maintained from the beginning to the end the purest and noblest character known in history.

Since the liar conclusion is not logical, let us assume He really believed He was God but was mistaken. If He truly believed He had created the world, had seen Abraham two thousand years before, and had authority over death, and yet none of this was true, we can only conclude that He was mad or

insane.

However, when you study the life of Jesus, He clearly does not display the characteristics of insanity. The abnormality and imbalance we find in a deranged person are not there. His teachings, such as the Sermon on the Mount, remain one of the greatest works ever recorded. Jesus was continually challenged by the Pharisees and lawyers, highly educated men whose modern day equivalent would be our university professors. They were fluent in several languages and were known for their scholarship of the Old Testament and Jewish law. They challenged Jesus with some of the most profound questions of their day and Jesus' quick answers amazed and silenced them. In the face of tremendous pressure, we find He exemplified the greatest composure.

For these reasons, the lunatic argument is not consistent. If both the liar and the lunatic options are not consistent with the facts, we must take a serious look at the third option: that Jesus was really God. The next question is, does He prove to have the credentials of God? Let us investigate this possibility.

## **Messianic Prophecy**

Thus far we have learned that Jesus is unique among all men for the profound statements He made about His divinity. We concluded that it is impossible to state He was simply a good moral teacher. From His amazing statements, He must be a liar, a lunatic, or God. Since the first two were not conceivable, we will begin looking at the third alternative, that He really is God. First, we must see if He had the credentials for these claims.

One of the most incredible types of evidence is the testimony of prophecy. The Old Testament contains a number of messianic prophecies made centuries before Christ appeared on the earth. The fact that He fulfilled each one is powerful testimony that

He was no ordinary man. Allow me to illustrate this point using eight prophecies.

- *Genesis 12:1-3 states the Messiah would come from the seed of Abraham.*
- *Genesis 49:10 states that He would be of the tribe of Judah.*
- *2 Samuel 7:12 states that Messiah would be of the line of King David.*
- *Micah 5:2 states that He would be born in the city of Bethlehem.*
- *Daniel 9:24 states He would die or be "cut off" exactly 483 years after the declaration to reconstruct the temple in 444 B.C.*
- *Isaiah 53 states that the Messiah would die with thieves, then be buried in a richman's tomb.*
- *Psalms 22:16 states upon His death His hands and His feet would be pierced. This is quite significant since Roman crucifixion had not been invented at the time the Psalmist was writing.*
- *Isaiah 49:7 states that Messiah would be known and hated by the entire nation. Not many men become known by their entire nation, and even less are despised by the entire nation.*

Now calculate the possibility of someone fulfilling these by coincidence. Let us suppose you estimate there is a one in a hundred chance a man could fulfill just one of these prophecies by chance. That would mean when all eight are put together there is a 1/10 to the 16th power probability that they were fulfilled by chance. Mathematician Peter Stoner estimates 1/10 to the 17th power possibility that these prophecies were fulfilled by chance. [\[2\]](#) Mathematicians have

estimated that the possibility of sixteen of these prophecies being fulfilled by chance are about 1/10 to the 45th power.[{3}](#) That's a decimal point followed by 44 zeroes and a 1! These figures show it is extremely improbable that these prophecies could have been fulfilled by accident. The figures for fulfillment of the 109 major prophecies are staggering.[{4}](#)

Skeptics have objected to the testimony of prophecy, stating they were written after the times of Jesus and therefore fulfill themselves. However, the evidence overwhelmingly shows these prophecies were clearly written centuries before Christ. It is an established fact even by liberal scholars that the Old Testament canon was completed by 450 B.C. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, was completed in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus in 250 B.C. The Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1948 contained the books of the Old Testament. Prophetic books like Isaiah were dated by paleographers to be written in 100 B.C.[{5}](#) Once again, these prophecies were confirmed to have been written centuries before Christ, and no religious leader has fulfilled anything close to the number of prophecies Jesus has fulfilled.

## **Confirmation of Miracles**

Jesus made some profound statements about His divinity. We concluded that it is impossible to state He was simply a good moral teacher. From His amazing statements we must conclude Him to be a liar, a lunatic, or God. Since the first two were not conceivable, we began looking at the third alternative. If this is true, we must see if He has the credentials for His claims.

If a person claimed to be God, we would expect supernatural confirmations. We've already discovered the phenomenal record of prophecy. We would also expect Him to demonstrate authority over nature, sickness, truth, sin, and death. Jesus demonstrated such authority. One line of evidence is seen in His miraculous deeds.

Jesus' miracles demonstrated His power over creation, sickness, and death. He demonstrated His authority over nature in such miracles as walking on water (Matt. 14:25), multiplying bread (Matt. 14:15-21), and calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41). He demonstrated authority over sickness with His instantaneous healings over terminal diseases. His healings did not take weeks or days but were instantaneous. He healed blindness (John 9), paralysis (Mark 2), leprosy (Luke 17), and deafness (Mark 7). Such miracles cannot be attributed to psychosomatic healing but to one who rules over creation. Jesus displayed authority over death by raising the dead as recorded in Luke 7 and Matthew 9.

Some doubt whether these miracles occurred. Several view the miracle accounts as fictitious legends developed after the death of Christ. Philosopher David Hume argued that human nature tends to gossip and exaggerate the truth. Others argue that the miracle accounts were propagated in distant lands by the followers of Christ well after the events so that the miracle accounts could not have been verified due to distance and time.

There are several arguments against these attacks. First, the Bible has proven to be a historically reliable document. For more information on this, see the [Authority of the Bible](#) article. Second, legends and exaggerations develop when followers travel to distant lands well after the time of the events and tell of stories which cannot be confirmed. Legends usually develop generations after the death of the figure at which time it is impossible to verify any of the accounts since all available witnesses are not available. However, the miracle accounts of Jesus were being told in the very cities in which they occurred during the lifetime of Jesus and to those who witnessed the event(s). Those who witnessed the miracles were followers of Christ and His enemies. These eye witnesses were questioned carefully by those in authority. If any claims were exaggerated or distorted, it could have easily

been refuted. The New Testament with its miracle accounts could not have survived had not the accounts been true.

German scholar Dr. Carsten Theide and British scholar Dr. Matthew D'Ancona in their book *Eyewitness to Jesus* state their conclusion after a scientific investigation of a fragment from the Gospel of Matthew. The scientific evidence revealed that the book was written before A.D. 70, possibly as early as A.D. 30.<sup>[6]</sup> This reveals the fact that the Gospels were written and circulated during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses, who were then able to judge the accuracy of such accounts, and they were unable to refute Jesus' miracles. None of the world's religious leaders performed the miracles Jesus did.

## **Authority Over Death**

A study of the claims of Jesus make it clear that He was professing to be God. It is then impossible to conclude that He was merely a good teacher. In light of these claims, one must conclude that He is a liar, a lunatic, or He is Lord. We investigated to see if His claim to be God was substantiated. Clearly the record of prophecy proved there was something unique about Him. The miracles He performed remain unequalled by anyone, but Jesus' greatest demonstration of authority is revealed in His power over sin and death.

There are many religions and religious leaders who claim to know what lies beyond the grave. The problem is, no one has demonstrated authority over the grave or confirmed their belief of what happens after death. Only Jesus demonstrated authority over death. All men have died, but Jesus is alive.

During His three-year ministry, Jesus exercised His authority over death by raising several people from the grave. Most notable is the account of Lazarus found in John 11. Here even in the face of His enemies, Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave. If this were not a historical account, this story would not have survived since it was recorded and propagated in the

very city where it occurred, in the lifetime of the witnesses, both followers and enemies of Christ. The enemies of Christianity could have easily refuted the account if it were not true. The fact is they could not refute it.

In regard to His own death and resurrection, the Old Testament predicted the death of the Messiah in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. However, it also predicts the resurrection in Psalm 16:8 11 and refers to the eternal reign of the Messiah. The only way to reconcile these verses is a resurrected Messiah.

Jesus himself made these predictions in regard to His resurrection: "Destroy this temple and in three days, I will raise it up" (John 2:19). In Mark 8:31 Jesus taught "that the son of Man must suffer many things . . . and be killed, and after three days rise again." In John 10:18 Jesus states, "I have authority to lay it (My life) down, and I have authority to take it up again." In these passages, Jesus predicts His own death and resurrection. Either Jesus was mad, or He really had the authority over death.

Jesus' resurrection proved His authority over sin and death. For a more detailed defense of the historicity of the Resurrection, check the Probe perspective on the Resurrection titled, [Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?](#)

At the beginning of this study we examined the claims of Christ. We realized only three conclusions were possible: liar, lunatic, or Lord. Since the first two were inconceivable, we needed to see if Christ could further confirm His credentials of being God. We discovered that His claims were confirmed by the record of prophecy, His miracles, and the Resurrection.

Jesus proves himself to be unique among all men.

*Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure for much of the human race. All the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever sailed, and*

*all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as this "One Solitary Life."*[{7}](#)

## Notes

1. William Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (New York: D.Appleton and Company, 1903), p. 8.
2. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernadino, Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), p. 167.
3. Norman Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton, Ill.:Victor Press, 1990), p. 116.
4. Tim LaHaye, *Jesus, Who is He?* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Books, 1996), p. 176.
5. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), pp. 365-66.
6. Peter Carsten Theide and Matthew D'Ancona, *Eyewitness to Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 163.
7. Anonymous, "One Solitary Life," quoted in Tim LaHaye, *Jesus, Who is He?*, p. 68.

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