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The Odds of Eight Messianic Prophecies Coming True



In 1957 Moody Press in Chicago, Illinois published a book by Professor Peter W. Stoner, called *Science Speaks*, An Evaluation of Certain Christian Evidences.

Stoner introduces the chapter on “The Christ of Prophecy” with a salient quote from **John 5:39**, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me…” We will return to this passage.

On page 71 Stoner notes, “I am making use of the well-known principle of probability. If the chance of one thing happening is one in M and the chance of another, and independent thing happening is one in N, then the chance that they both shall happen is one in M times N . . . Suppose one man in every ten is bald, and one man in 100 has lost a finger, then one man in every 1,000 (the product of 10 and 100) is both bald and has lost a finger.”

In an e-mail correspondence I had with attorney Lee Stroebel. In January of 2007, the former agnostic and author of *The Case for Christ*, *The Case for Faith* and *The Case for Easter* noted that the statistical odds of select messianic prophecies coming true as documented in *Science Speaks*, gave him confidence to believe in Christ.

It is precisely because I wish to encourage you, my dear reader, to also believe in Christ, that I summarize some of Stoner’s findings. In his forward to this book H.

Harold Hartzler, Ph.D, the Secretary-Treasurer to “American Scientific Affiliation” writes the following. “The manuscript *Science Speaks* has been carefully reviewed by a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation member . . . and Executive Council . . . and has been found, in general, to be dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. The mathematical analysis included is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound and Professor Stoner has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way.”

As we identify specific prophecies, we will inquire what would the statistical probability be that “One man in how many men has fulfilled this prophecy?” (p. 99f) The odds Stoner notes were initially proposed by a Pasadena City College class in Christian Evidence conducted by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. As each prophecy was discussed, students “agreed unanimously on a definite estimate as being both reasonable and conservative.” (p. 100) Stoner taught this same class on Christian Evidence 12 times and merged the odds which each group of students proposed to come up with the statistics used in the chapter he titles “The Christ of Prophecy.”

The following eight prophecies were considered:

1. But you, Beit-Lechem near Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans Judah, out of you will come for Me one who will be Ruler over Isra’el, whose origins are far in the past, back in ancient times (Micah 5:2 CJB) (Note: today the population of the earth is larger than the 2 billion figure used when Stoner made his model.) To arrive at the answer Stoner started with the average population of Bethlehem from the days of the prophet Micah to this present time and divided it by the average population of the earth for the same period. It was discovered that this ratio was 1 to 280,000. Since that time the earth has had an average population of 2,000,000,000. So the answer would be one man in 7,150/2,000,000,000 or one man in 2.8 X10 to the fifth power was born in Bethlehem.

2. Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me . . . (Malachi 3:1). How many men who have been born in Bethlehem have had a forerunner sent by **God** to prepare his way? We will use the conservative estimate of 1 in 1,000 or 1 in 10 to the third power.

3. Rejoice with all your heart, daughter of Tziyon! Shout out loud, daughter of Yerushalayim! Look! Your King is coming to you. He is

righteous, and He is victorious. Yet He is humble – He's riding on a donkey, yes, on a lowly donkey's colt (Zechariah 9:9 CJB). The question now becomes, "One man in how many, who was born in Bethlehem and had a forerunner, entered into Jerusalem as a king riding on a donkey's colt?" Because this question is too restrictive, we will broaden it to read, "One man in how many, who has entered Jerusalem as a ruler, has entered riding on a donkey, on a lowly donkey's colt?" We will use 1 in 10 to the second power.

4. If someone asks Him, "What are these gashes between your shoulders?" He will answer, "I got them at My friend's house" (Zechariah 13:6 CJB). One man in how many all over the world has been betrayed by a friend and as a result suffered wounds on his back? We will use 1 in 1,000 or 1 in 10 to the third power.

5. I told them, "If you think it best give me my pay; but if not, keep it." So they paid me thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12). Of all the people who have suffered betrayal, how many have been betrayed for exactly thirty pieces of silver? We will use 1 in 1,000 or 1 in 10 to third power.

6. And the LORD said to me, "Throw it unto the potter – the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver, and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD" (Zechariah 11:13). This specifies that the price is not to be returned, but rather cast down in the house of **the Lord**. Then, without the person throwing them down doing anything, those to whom the silver was returned would have to give the silver to the potter. The reason the priests to whom the remorseful Judas returned the money he received from them to betray the Messiah did not put the funds back into the temple treasury was because it was not money obtained in a kosher, an appropriate way. There was a provision that the priests could spend discretionary funds to meet specific needs. The field they purchased from the potter was subsequently used as a cemetery for travelers and low income people. None of the students had ever heard of another incident involving all these criteria. So we used the estimate as 1 in 100,000 or 10 to the fifth power.

7. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a Lamb to the slaughter, **and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth (Isaiah 53:7).** What are the odds that an innocent man who has been betrayed, oppressed and afflicted and is on trial for his life will not offer a single word in his own defense?" We will use 1 in 1,000 or 1 in 10

to the third power.

8. Dogs are all around me, a pack of villains closes in on me like a lion at my hands and feet (Psalm 22:16). When King David wrote these words, death by crucifixion had yet to be invented. The question is, “One man in how many from the time of King David on, has been crucified?” (p. 105) We estimated that it would have been 1 in 10,000 or 1 in 10 to the fourth power.

Next, “If these estimates are considered fair, one man in how many men, the world over, will fulfill all eight prophecies? Let’s run the math. We have 1 in 2.8 X 100,000 X 1,000 X 100 X 1,000 X 1,000 X 100,000 X 1,000 X 10,000. This gives us 1 in 2.8 X 10 to the twenty-eighth power. Let us simplify it by calling it 1 X 10 to the twenty-eighth power.

Written out we have 1 in 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000.” (p.105f)

What are the odds that any man living from the day of these prophecies down to the present time? To get this answer, we divide our 10 to the 28th power by the total number of people who have lived since the time of these prophecies. At the time this book was published we come up wit 88 billion people or 8.8 X 10 to the tenth power. To simplify it let’s round it off to 10 to the 11th power. The odds of any one man who lived from when the prophecies were made until the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the seventeenth power.

Can we visualize this with an illustration? Suppose we took an atheistic professor, blindfolded him and covered the state of Texas two feet deep with silver dollars. Then we put a check on one of those silver dollars and mixed them up. The odds of one person fulfilling just these eight prophecies would be the same as this atheistic professor selecting the silver dollar upon which we have placed a check, in his first try.

There are some 300 – 350 prophecies that were written in the TaNaKh to help us identify which person is the promised Messiah (**to see link click Mu – 354 Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ**). Suppose we add eight more prophecies to our list? And assume that their chance at being fulfilled by just one man is the same as the eight prophecies just considered. Those odds would be 10 to the 28th power X 10 to the 17th power or 1 in 10 to the 45th power.

How big would a ball of silver dollars be using this number? Its diameter would be

thirty times the distance from the center of the earth to the sun. Let's take that same atheistic professor, put a space suit on him, place a check on one of those silver dollars and shoot him out into space. Do you think he would pick the silver dollar with a check on it the first time? Maybe if we left his blindfold off.

Now let's keep the same odds and choose 48 prophecies. The odds of one person fulfilling them all would be 1 in 10 to the 157th power. The silver dollar is too large to make a comparison. It takes 2.5 X 10 to the 15th power of electrons laid side by side to make a line single file one inch long. Light travels at 86,000 miles per second. Suppose we made a solid ball of electrons extending all directions from the earth to the distance of 6 billion light years.

Dr. Stoner continues, "Suppose again we had this great amount of electrons, 10 to the 157th power of them, and we were abler to make 500 of these tremendous balls, 6 billion light-years in radius, each minute. If we worked day and night it would take us 10 to the 10th times the 6 billion years back to creation to use up our supply of electrons." (p. 111) Please put a check on one of these electrons. Now lets take this same atheistic professor and ask him to find the marked electron on his first try.

Remember, these are the odds of one man fulfilling just 48 of the 300-350 messianic prophecies. Who among us can deny Christ's credentials? The universe is not large enough to contain the evidence.

Let's simplify it. Suppose we took all the messianic prophecies and placed the odds of any one man fulfilling them at 1:4. We would end up with a number larger than the one we obtained by calculating the odds from the 48 prophecies. Stoner adds, "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." (p. 112)

Suppose you were a highway patrol officer and you stopped a person for going 80 in a 60 mph zone. Suppose the person said, "But I know the law says the speed limit is 60, therefore, I ask you not to ticket me." What would you say to the driver? Let us return to the opening passage where Christ is teaching in **John 5:39-40, 45-47: You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me to have life . . . But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moshe, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe in Me, for he wrote about Me. But**

since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?

Now that you have learned additional facts that document the **Messiah's** identity, you most likely will give intellectual assent that what the Scriptures say is true. In the same way, the person caught speeding may give intellectual assent regarding the posted speed limit. But even as knowledge will not be enough so that the policeman decides to not ticket the speeder, so knowledge of the Messiah's identity is not enough. I must also come to the **Messiah** of whom Moses writes in order to get eternal life. So must we all.

{Aside: Some of my scholarly readers are experts on Moses and the creation account in **Genesis**. They will enjoy chapter one of this book. The odds of Moses correctly guessing the sequence and substance of 13 aspects of creation (as he recorded it in **Genesis**) by chance are 1 in 331,351,040. (p. 47) There is enough fascinating evidence here to make many outstanding lectures. Stoner adds, "If you wish to know the definiteness of the evidence in chapters 1-3 combined, you will have to multiply all of the individual probabilities together. The result is an astonishingly large number, 1 in 1.7 X 10 to the 245th power." (p. 113)}[1733]