Prophecy & Probability
Study & Notes by Franklin

The reason why **prophecy is an indication of the divine authorship of the Scriptures** and hence a testimony to the trustworthiness of the Message of the Scriptures, is because of the minute probability of fulfillment.

Anyone can make predictions, but having all of them fulfilled is vastly different. And, the more prophecies made, and the more details they contain, then the precise fulfillment will be the exceedingly less likely. For example, what's the likelihood of a person predicting today **the exact city** in which the birth of a future leader would take place, well into the 21st century? This is indeed what the prophet **Micah did 700 years** before the Messiah. And, what is the probability of predicting the precise **manner of death** that a new, unknown religious leader would experience, a thousand years from now - a manner of death presently unknown, and to remain unknown for hundreds of years? Yet, this is what **David did in 1000 B.C.**

What is the likelihood, or probability, of predicting the specific date of the appearance of some great future leader, hundreds of years in advance? This is what Daniel did, 530 years before Christ.

Below is a summary of **certain** prophecies (not all) with both the verse for the prophecy along with the verse evidencing its fulfillment:

Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled in One Person:
1. Betrayed by a friend. (Psalms 41:9; Matthew 26:49).
2. Thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15).
3. Betrayal money cast to the floor of the temple (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:5).
4. Betrayal money used to buy the potter's field (Zechariah 11:13: Matthew 27:7).
5. Forsaken and deserted by his disciples (Zechariah 13:7; Mark 14:50)
6. Accused by false witnesses (Psalms 35:11; Matthew 26:59-60).
7. Silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12).
8. Wounded and bruised (Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 27:26).
9. Hated without a cause (Psalm 69:4; John 15:25).
10. Struck and spat upon (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67).
11. Mocked, ridiculed and rejected (Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 27:27-31 and John 7:5, 48)
12. Collapse from weakness (Psalms 109:24-25; Luke 23:26).
13. Taunted with specific words (Psalms 22:6-8; Matthew 27:39-43).
14. People will shake their heads at Him (Psalms 109:25; Matthew 27:39).

15. People will stare at Him (Psalms 22:17; Luke 23:35).
16. Executed among "sinners" (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38).
17. Hands and feet will be pierced (Psalms 22:16; Luke 23:33).
18. Will pray for his persecutors (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 23:34).
19. Friends and family will stand afar off and watch (Psalms 38:11; Luke 23:49).
20. Garments will be divided and won by the casting of lots (Psalms 22:18; John 19:23-24).
21. Will thirst (Psalms 69:21; John 19:28).
22. Will be given gall and vinegar (Psalms 69:21; Matthew 27:34).
23. Will commit Himself to God (Psalms 31:5; Luke 23:46).
24. Bones will be left unbroken (Psalms 34:20; John 19:33).
25. Heart will rupture (Psalm 22:14; John 19:34).
26. Side will be pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34).
27. Darkness will come over the land at midday (Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45).
28. Will be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57-60).
29. Will die 438 years after the declaration of Artaxerxes to rebuild the temple in 444 BC (Daniel 9:24).
30. Will be raised from the dead (Psalms 16:10; Acts 2:31), ascend to heaven (Psalms 68:18; Acts 1:9) and be seated the right hand of God in full majesty and authority (Psalms 110:1; Hebrews 1:3).

Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College, Peter Stoner, has calculated the **probability of one man fulfilling the major prophecies** made concerning the Messiah. The estimates were worked out by twelve different classes representing some 600 university students.

The students carefully weighed all the factors, discussed each prophecy at length, and examined the various circumstances which might indicate that men had conspired together to fulfill a particular prophecy. They made their estimates conservative enough so that there was finally unanimous agreement even among the most skeptical students.

However Professor Stoner then took their estimates, and made them even more conservative. He also encouraged other skeptics or scientists to make their own estimates to see if his conclusions were more than fair. Finally, he submitted his figures for review to a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation. Upon examination, **they verified that his calculations were dependable and accurate** in regard to the scientific material presented (Peter Stoner, Science Speaks, Chicago: Moody Press, 1969, 4).

Professor Peter W. Stoner who authored "Science Speaks" stated that the probability of just **eight particular prophecies** being fulfilled in **one person** is: 1 in 10^{17} or: 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. The eight prophecies used in the calculation were:

1. Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; fulfilled in Matt. 2:1-7; John 7:42; Luke 2:47).

2. Messiah is to be preceded by a Messenger (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; fulfilled in Matthew 3:1-3; 11:10; John 1:23; Luke 1:17).

3. Messiah is to enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; fulfilled in Luke 35-37; Matthew 21:6-11).

4. Messiah is to be betrayed by a friend (Psalms 41:9; 55:12-14; fulfilled in Matthew 10:4; 26:49-50; John 13:21).

5. Messiah is to be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; fulfilled in Matthew 26:15; 27:3).

6. The money for which Messiah is sold is to be thrown "to the potter" in God's house (Zechariah 11:13; fulfilled in Matthew 27:5-7).

7. Messiah is to be silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; fulfilled in Matthew 27:12).

8. Messiah is to be executed by crucifixion as a thief (Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 53:5,12; fulfilled in Luke 23:33; John 20:25; Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27,28).

This statement was **validated by the American Scientific Affiliation**.

This number has been illustrated as follows: If we take 1 X 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas, they'll 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?

Professor Stoner went on to consider 48 prophecies and says, "... We find the chance that any one **man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157}**.
"This is a really 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 times 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, counting steadily 250 each minute, 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 times 19,000,000 [nineteen million times nineteen million times nineteen million] or 6.9 times 10^{21} years.

This is approximately **the total number of electrons in all the mass of the known universe**. In other words the **probability** of Jesus Christ fulfilling **48 prophecies** is the same as one person being able to pick out one electron out of the entire mass of our universe.

Such is the chance of any one man fulfilling any 48 prophecies. Yet **Jesus Christ fulfilled not just 48 prophecies, not just 61 prophecies, but more than 324 individual prophecies** that the Prophets wrote concerning the Messiah. I haven't been able to find the statistical projection representing the possibility of Jesus Christ fulfilling 324 prophecies but I really don't think it matters given the illustrations set forth above.

Does it really take faith to come to salvation through Jesus Christ? Absolutely but that **faith is not a blind faith** as some would want you to believe but instead, it is **a faith based upon facts**. How much faith? Maybe not very much if one really takes the time to look at the facts and take into consideration the statistics and probability of the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

When someone tries to tell you that Christianity is a religious faith based upon ignorant acceptance of certain precepts that have no basis in fact, they are sadly mistaken. Christianity alone, among the religions of the world, makes sense. It is a faith that not only can be an emotional faith (which it is), it is also an intellectual faith.

As Stoner concludes, '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, op. cit., 112).'

God so thoroughly vindicated Jesus Christ that even mathematicians and statisticians, who were without faith, had to acknowledge that **it is scientifically impossible to deny that Jesus is the Christ**.