

Incredible Prophecies: Do They Prove God Exists? Part Two

If Specific Prophecies Were Fulfilled by the Messiah, Does the Science of Probability Consider This Proof There Is a God? (con't)

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Excerpted from their book *The Case for Jesus the Messiah*

As we stated in the last article, 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 of 600 college 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.

But then Professor Stoner 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.¹

For example, concerning Micah 5:2, where it states the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, Stoner and his students determined the **average** population of Bethlehem from the time of Micah to the present; then they divided it by the **average** population of the earth during the same period. They concluded that the chance of one man being born in Bethlehem was one in 2.8×10^5 —or rounded, one in 300,000.

After examining eight different prophecies, they conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10^{17} .

To illustrate how large the number 10^{17} is (a figure with 17 zeros), Stoner gave this illustration. Imagine covering the entire state of Texas with silver dollars to a level of two feet deep. The total number of silver dollars needed to cover the whole state would be 10^{17} . Now, choose just one of those silver dollars, mark it and drop it from an airplane. Then thoroughly stir all the silver dollars all over the state.

When that has been done, blindfold one man, tell him he can travel wherever he wishes in the state of Texas. But sometime he must stop, reach down into the two feet of silver dollars and try to pull up that one specific silver dollar that has been marked.

Now, the chance of his finding that one silver dollar in the state of Texas would be the chance the prophets had for eight of their prophecies coming true in any one man in the future.

In financial terms, is there anyone who would not invest in a financial venture if the chance of failure were only one in 10^{17} ? This is the kind of sure investment we are offered by God for belief in His Messiah.

Professor Stoner concluded: "The fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one chance in 10^{17} of being absolute."²

Another way of saying this is that any person who minimizes or ignores the significance of the biblical identifying signs concerning the Messiah would be foolish.

But, of course, there are many more than eight prophecies. In another calculation Stoner used 48 prophecies (even though he could have used 456) and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is 10^{157} .³

How large is the number one in 10^{157} ? 10^{157} contains 157 zeros! Let us try to illustrate this number using electrons.

Electrons are very small objects. They are smaller than atoms. It would take 2.5 times 10^{15} of them, laid side by side, to make one inch. Even if we counted four electrons every second and counted day and night, it would still take us 19 million years just to count a line of electrons one inch long.

But how many electrons would it take if we were dealing with 10^{157} electrons? Imagine building a solid ball of electrons that would extend in all directions from the earth a length of 6 billion light years. The distance in miles of just **one** light year is 6.4 trillion miles. That would be a big ball! But not big enough to measure 10^{157} electrons.

In order to do that, you must take that big ball of electrons reaching the length of 6 billion light years long in all directions and multiply it by 6×10^{28} ! How big is that? It's the length of the space required to store trillions and trillions and trillions of the same gigantic balls and more. In fact, the space required to store all of these balls combined together would just start to "scratch the surface" of the number of electrons we would need to really accurately speak about 10^{157} .

But assuming you have some idea of the number of electrons we are talking about, now imagine marking just one of those electrons in that huge number. Stir them all up. Then appoint one person to travel in a rocket for as long as he wants, anywhere he wants to go. Tell him to stop and segment a part of space, then take a high-powered microscope and find that one marked electron in that segment. What do you think his chances of being successful would be? It would be one in 10^{157} .

Remember, this number represents the chance of only 48 prophecies coming true in one person. It illustrates why it is absolutely impossible for anyone to have fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies by chance. In fact, a leading authority on probability theory, Emile Borel, states in his book ***Probabilities and Life***, that once we go past one chance in 10^{50} , the probabilities are so small it's impossible to think they will ever occur.⁴

Here is one last illustration of the immensity of the number 10^{157} and why the science of probability shows we are dealing with the miraculous. Imagine one ant traveling at the speed of only **one inch** every 15 billion years. If he could only carry one atom at a time, how many atoms could he move in 10^{157} years? He could, even at that incredibly slow speed, be able to move all the atoms in 600,000 trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion universes the size of our universe, a distance of 30 billion light years!⁵

Again, all of this means it is impossible for 48 prophecies to be fulfilled by chance. It is proof that there must be a God who supernaturally gave this information.

Footnotes:

1. Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks: Scientific Proof of the Accuracy of Prophecy and the Bible* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1969), p. 4.
2. Ibid., p. 107.
3. Ibid., p. 109.
4. Emile Borel, *Probabilities and Life* (New York, Dover, 1962), chs. 1-3.
5. James Coppedge, *Evolution: Possible or Impossible?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1973), 120.