

Christ in Prophecy
Apologetics 16: Stoner's Scientific Defense
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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Most people think of Science and the Bible as being in conflict with each other. Would you be surprised to find out that a scientist has used the science of mathematical probability to prove that the Bible is the Word of God, and Jesus is the Son of God? Stay tuned for this fascinating revelation.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy.

For many years, I have been quoting a booklet by Peter Stoner called "*Science Speaks*." I like to use a remarkable illustration from it that scientifically validates Jesus as God in the flesh. Recently, I decided that I would try to find a copy of that booklet so that I could discover all that it had to say about Bible prophecy. I discovered that the booklet was first published in 1944 and has gone through several subsequent editions. And after considerable searching on the Internet, I was finally able to find a revised edition published in 1976.

Peter Stoner was chairman of the Mathematics and Astronomy departments at Pasadena City College until 1953 when he moved to Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. There he served as chairman of the science division. In the edition I purchased, there was a foreword by Dr. Harold Hartzler, an officer of the American Scientific Affiliation. He wrote that the manuscript had been carefully reviewed by a committee of his organization and that quote, "The mathematical analysis included is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound." He further stated that in the opinion of the affiliation, Professor Stoner quote, "Has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way." As I said at the opening of this program, most people think of the Bible and Science as being in direct conflict with each other. But Peter Stoner's book shows how the two can be complimentary and compatible.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Stoner begins his book with a very interesting insight about a book written by this man, Charles Young. He was the author of the standard college textbook on astronomy that was published in 1898. Writing in the 1958 revised edition of his book, Stoner pointed out that his copy of Young's textbook was full of scientific errors. Now think about that for a moment, folks. A science book that was only 60 years old was full of scientific errors. Yet, the Bible, written between 3,500 to 2,000 years ago does not contain any scientific errors! How can that be? The answer, of course, has to be that the Bible is supernatural in origin.

Consider for a moment the following scientific truths contained in the Bible: For example, the shape of the earth is mentioned in Isaiah 40:22. The passage refers specifically to “the circle of the earth.” Gravity can be found in Job 26:7 where the passage says, “God hangs the earth on nothing.” Ecclesiastes 1:8 mentions atmospheric circulation. A reference to ocean currents can be found in Psalm 8:8. The hydraulic cycle is described in Ecclesiastes 1:7. And the significance of blood as the key to life is found in Leviticus 17:11. Modern laws of hygiene can be found in Leviticus 11 thru 15. And if that is not enough, take a look at these words in Romans 8:21, “The creation will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

This is an expression of what is known in physics as The Second Law of Thermodynamics namely, that all of creation is in bondage to decay. And, folks, these are only a few examples of scientific truths written in the Scriptures long before they were quote-on-quote “discovered” by scientists. In contrast, consider the following revelations of Mohammed that are contained in the Hadith, one of the sacred books of Islam. He wrote, "The earth is flat like a carpet. The sun sets in a muddy spring. Stars are closer to earth than the moon. Water cannot be contaminated by anything. Drinking camel urine will make you healthy. A fly in your drink can cure you of disease. Fever comes from the heat of Hell."

Such errors are expected in documents written over 1,000 years ago, but such errors are not found in the Bible. Stoner proceeds to present scientific evidence in behalf of special creation. For example, he points out that science had previously taught that special creation was absolutely impossible because matter could not be destroyed or created. He then points out that atomic physics has now proved that energy can be turned into matter and matter into energy.

Stoner then considers the order of creation as presented in Genesis 1:1-13. He presents argument, after argument from a scientific viewpoint to sustain the order which Genesis chronicles. He then asks, “What chance did Moses have when writing the first chapter of Genesis of getting thirteen items all accurate and in satisfactory order?” His calculations conclude it would be 1 chance in 31 times 10 to the 21st power! Folks, that’s a very big number. Stoner concludes, “Perhaps God wrote such an account in Genesis so that in these latter days, when science has greatly developed, we would be able to verify His account and know for certainty that God created this planet and the life on it.”

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: The second section of Stoner’s book, is entitled “Prophetic Accuracy.” This is where the book becomes absolutely fascinating. You see, my friends, fulfilled prophecy is one of the things that makes the Bible the most unique book in the world. The Bible contains hundreds of fulfilled prophecies concerning towns, and cities, and nations, and empires and individuals. In contrast, there are no fulfilled prophecies in the Book of Mormon, the Quran, the Hindu Vedras or the sayings of Buddha and Confucius.

Yet the Bible is full of prophecies that have already been fulfilled in detail. Consider, for example, Daniel’s prophecy made during the time of the Babylonian Empire in which he prophesied that Babylon would be overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire which would subsequently fall to the Greeks who would be followed by the Romans.

Jeremiah prophesied that the Babylonian captivity of the Jews would last 70 years, and it did.

And then there is Isaiah who prophesied that a man named Cyrus would release the Jews from Babylonian captivity. He presented this prophecy 150 years before Cyrus was born! Stoner focuses in on a prophecy in Ezekiel 26 concerning the city of Tyre. Seven prophecies are contained in this chapter which were written in 590 BC: First, Nebuchadnezzar shall conquer the city. Second, other nations will also attack the city. Third, its stones and timbers will be thrown into the sea. Fourth, the city will be reduced to a bare rock. Fifth, its fall will spread fear to other cities. Sixth, fishermen will spread their nets there. Seven, the original site will never be rebuilt.

Four years after this prophecy was given, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre. The siege lasted 13 years. And when the city finally fell in 573 BC, it was discovered that everything of value had been moved to a nearby island. But 241 years later, Alexander the Great arrived on the scene, fearing that the fleet of Tyre might be used against his homeland, he decided to take the island where the city had been moved to. He accomplished this goal by building a causeway from the mainland to the island, and he did that by using all the building materials from the ruins of the old city. Neighboring cities were so frightened by Alexander's conquest that they immediately opened their gates to him. And ever since that time, Tyre has remained in ruins and is a place where fishermen spread their nets. Thus, every detail of the prophecies concerning Tyre were fulfilled exactly as predicted.

Now, the unique thing that Stoner did in his book is to apply the mathematical science of probability to these prophecies and their fulfillment. He pointed out the conquering of Babylon is 1 in 3. Attacked by other nations, 1 in 5. Debris thrown into the sea, 1 in 10. These are odds. Reduced to bare rock, 1 in 500. Causes other cities to fear, 1 in 5. Fishermen spread their nets, 1 in 10. Old site will never be rebuilt, 1 in 20.

Stoner calculated that the probability that all the prophecies about Tyre could have been made in human wisdom is: 1 in 7.5 times 10 to the 7th power, or 1 in 75 million. Stoner proceeds to calculate the probabilities of 11 prophecies concerning 9 different cities and concerning the Eastern Gate and the Temple Mount. And combining all these prophecies, he concludes that the probability of these 11 prophecies coming true, if written in human wisdom, is 1 in 5.76 to 10 to the 59th power. Needless to say, this is a number beyond the realm of possibility.

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: The third and most famous section of Stoner's book concerns Messianic prophecy. His theme verse for this section is John 5:39 which reads: "Search the Scriptures because it is these that bear witness of Me." That's Jesus speaking.

There are approximately 330 prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures about the First Coming of the Messiah. Many are repetitive. When these are removed, we end up with 108 separate and distinct prophecies.

Stoner proceeds to select eight of the best known of these prophecies about the Messiah and calculates the odds of their accidental fulfillment in one person. The eight prophecies he selected were: The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. A messenger will prepare the way for the Messiah. The Messiah will enter Jerusalem as a king riding on a donkey. The Messiah will be betrayed by a friend. The Messiah will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. The betrayal money will be used to purchase a potter's field. The Messiah will remain silent before His accusers.

Number 8 the Messiah will die by having His hands and feet pierced.

Stoner's conclusion is that the probability of all 8 of these prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of one person is 1 in 10 to the 17th power. That's one in 100 quadrillion! And remember, we are talking here about the fulfillment of only eight prophecies. Jesus fulfilled 108.

I love the illustration, how he illustrated the meaning of the odds of one in 10 to the 17th power. He asked the reader to imagine filling the state of Texas knee deep in silver dollars. Include in this huge number one silver dollar with a black check mark on it. Then, turn a blindfolded person loose in this sea of silver dollars. And the odds that the first coin he would pick up would be the one with the black check mark are the same as eight prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of Jesus. The point, of course, is that when people say that the fulfillment of prophecy in the life of Jesus was accidental, they do not know what they are talking about.

Keep in mind that Jesus did not just fulfill eight prophecies, He fulfilled 108. The chances of fulfilling 16 is 1 in 10 to the 45th power. When you get to a total of 48, the odds increase to 1 in 10 to the 157th power. Accidental fulfillment of these prophecies is simply beyond the realm of possibility. When confronted with these statistics, skeptics often fall back on the argument that Jesus purposefully fulfilled the prophecies. And you know there is no doubt that Jesus was aware of the prophecies and His fulfillment of them. For example, when He got ready to enter Jerusalem the last time, He told His disciples to find Him a donkey to ride so that the prophecy of Zechariah could be fulfilled which said, "Behold, your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey." But folks, many of the prophecies concerning the Messiah could not be purposefully fulfilled, such as the town of His birth or the nature of His betrayal, or the manner of His death.

Part 5

Dr. Reagan: I want to take a moment to talk with you in detail about two very remarkable prophecies. One is Psalm 22, the other is Micah 5. Let's take Psalm 22 first. This Psalm was written by David 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus. It describes in great detail the physical, the spiritual, and the emotional suffering of the Messiah before His death.

It begins in verse 1 with spiritual suffering. With the statement, "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?" Think of that for a moment. Jesus was a part of the Trinity. He had coexisted in the Trinity forever. He had perfect fellowship with His Father. And yet as He hung on that cross all the sins of mankind, all your sins, all my sins were put upon Him. And when that happened it was as if God had to turn His back on Jesus because He could not countenance that sin. And the perfect fellowship seemed to be broken for a second. And Jesus cried out from the depths of His heart, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" To me that was the greatest suffering that Jesus had on the cross. Not the physical suffering. Not the emotional suffering, but the spiritual suffering.

But in this psalm David continues to talk about the suffering that Jesus has on the cross. For example if you go to verse 6 you will see that he begins to talk about "What a worm I am. I'm not a man. I'm a reproach of men. I'm despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me. They separate with the lip, they wag their head saying, 'Commit yourself to the Lord, let Him deliver Him.'" In other words he's saying that as the Messiah is dying that people will mock Him. They will sneer at Him. And there will be this kind of emotional suffering as people reject Him. And that is exactly what happened as Jesus was hanging on the cross. And keep in mind again this is written 1,000 years before Jesus was born.

Then in verse 11 he picks up and he begins to talk about more of the suffering. He says, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help." He is crying out to God. He feels solitude. He feels deserted by His friends. And His friends did desert Him as He hung upon the cross. And then in verse 12 he continues talking about spiritual suffering. He says, "Many bulls have surrounded me, strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me." These are symbols he's using for the demonic spirits who were dancing around that cross as He hung there bleeding to death for you and me. He says, "They open wide their mouth at me as a ravening and roaring lion." A reference to Satan. And again this is spiritual suffering as He hangs there. The demons of Satan believed they have got the greatest victory of all of history as they are killing the Messiah. In verse 14 he returns to His physical suffering, "I'm poured out like water," He says, "all my bones are out of joint." And yes, they were out of joint as He hung on that cross. He says, "My heart is like wax, it's melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd. And my tongue clings to my jaws. And they lay me in the dust of death. And then he goes again, he says, "My dogs have surrounded me. A band of evil doers have encompassed me. They have pierced my hands and my feet." And He says, "I can count my bones. They look, they stare at me. They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." And that's exactly what happened as Jesus hung on the cross 1,000 years later the Roman soldiers cast lots for the only possession Jesus had in the world, the robe that He wore. Now to me the most remarkable of all these verses is verse 16.

In verse 16 David writes, the Messiah speaking, "They pierced my hands, and my feet." Now I want you to think about that for a moment folks. This was written 1,000 years before Jesus was born. And yet, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit David writes that the Messiah will die by having His hands and His feet pierced. Now, at the time this was written there was only way that the Jews executed people, and that way was by stoning them to death. One-thousand years later the only way that Jews executed was by stoning people to death, nothing had changed. Yet, David said the Messiah is not going to die by being stoned to death. He is going to die by having His hands and His feet pierced. Folks, this prophecy was not only 1,000 years before Jesus was born, this prophecy was 700 years before the Romans developed and perfected the art of crucifixion. This is an amazing prophecy. Absolutely amazing.

One other thing that I want to mention about this is going back to that verse 1, "My God, my God why have hast thou forsaken me?" And notice how the psalm ends, it ends with these words, "He has performed it." That's in the New American Standard Version. In the Hebrew it literally says, "He has finished it." It is finished. Because of that many people believe that as Jesus hung on the cross He quoted this psalm about His death that was written 1,000 years before His death. And that the people at the foot of the cross listening to Him wrote down only the first words, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" And the last words, "It is finished." Wow. To me this is one of most remarkable prophecies in all the Word of God. And there is no way in the world it could be by coincidence. It had to be by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Now, let's look for a moment at another remarkable prophecy. A prophecy that can be found in the book of Micah chapter 5. Let's turn over there for a moment. This is a prophecy that is probably better known by the general public than any of the Messianic prophecies in the Bible. And there's a lot of Messianic prophecies in the Bible, but this one is really remarkable. In Micah 5 and in verse 2 Micah writes, "But as for you Bethlehem Ephrathah too little to be among the clans of Judah. From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."

Now, folks, I want you to notice something here. This prophecy was written 700 years before Jesus was born, and yet Micah by inspiration of the Holy Spirit says the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. That can't be a coincidence. It has to be by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But I want you to notice something. I want you to notice how specific this prophecy is, because it does not just say He is going to be born in Bethlehem. It says He's going to be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah. Now, what in the world is that all about?

Well let me tell you what it's about. At the time that this prophecy was written there were two Bethlehems in Israel. And instead of just saying the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Micah nailed which Bethlehem it would be. It would be like if today I were to ask you: "Where were you born." And if you were to say, "I was born in Springfield." I'd have to ask you another question wouldn't I? I'd have to ask you another question because did you know there is a Springfield in 35 states of the nation. Think of it. You know cities like Springfield, Illinois; Springfield, Missouri; Springfield, Massachusetts. Thirty-five states have a Springfield. So if you tell me you're born in Springfield I've got to say, "What state?" The same in that day and time, there were two Bethlehems. There was one Bethlehem, Bethlehem of Judea which was located right outside of Jerusalem. And then there was Bethlehem Zebulun that was located up near the city of Nazareth. In fact it was about 5 miles west of Nazareth. So, there were two Bethlehems at the time. So, if the prophet is going to tell you precisely what city the Messiah would be born in, he had to nail it. And he did. Bethlehem Ephrathah. Wow, that's what I call precision.

Now folks, I want you to compare that for a moment to the kind of prophecies you find in books like that of Nostradamus. Nostradamus I don't know if you've ever read his prophecies or not, but they are absolute gobbledygook. I mean you read them, they make no sense whatsoever. And you can take them and you can apply them to anything and say, "Oh, well this is a fulfillment or that's a fulfillment." But they are just gobbledygook. For a prophecy to be a real prophecy it has got to be precise. It has got to be definite. It's got to tell you when, where and how. So that you can one day look back and say, "That prophecy has been literally fulfilled to the finest extent." And that is exactly what we find in Bible prophecy. Bible prophecy is precise. And the prophecies concerning the Messiah are very, very precise. As I say there was 108.

You know I studied for seven years trying to find all the Messianic prophecies in the Bible. And we put them together in a publication we call the "Christ in Prophecy Study Guide" which we published in 1987, the seventh year of the ministry. We've put out additions of that over the years. And in there you can find all 108 prophecies in detail, where they're stated, when they were fulfilled in the Scriptures, and what they meant and all. And there's nothing that is hazy about them. There's nothing that you have to guess about them. They are very, very precise. But these two in particular I think really nail it, that we are talking about Bible prophecy confirming that the Bible is the Word of God, and that Jesus is the Son of God.

And, oh, by the way there is one more point I would like to make concerning Messianic prophecy and that is to me the most remarkable book of all is the book of Zechariah in the Old Testament. I say that because it turned my life around in terms of understanding Bible prophecy. I was always told that end time Bible prophecy was apocalyptic which means it doesn't mean what it says. I was told that over, and over, doesn't mean what it says. And then one day I read the little book of Zechariah. And Zechariah is full of First Coming prophecies. It says the Messiah will come. He will come to Jerusalem. He will come on a donkey. He will be hailed as King. That He will be betrayed. That He will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, you'll find that in Zechariah 11 verse 12. It says that the silver will be used to buy a potter's field. It says that He will have His hands pierced. All of these prophecies are in the book of Zechariah. And it suddenly occurred to me and you don't have to be a rocket scientist to conclude this, it

occurred to me that if the First Coming prophecies meant exactly what they say, then the Second Coming prophecies must mean exactly what they say. And in the book of Zechariah he says that the Messiah will return to the Mount of Olives, it will split in half. He will speak a supernatural word, the Antichrist and his forces will be destroyed. And it says in verse 9 of chapter 14, "On that day He will become King over all the earth."

Part 6

Dr. Reagan: I would like to conclude this program by sharing a short, one minute video with you that was developed by my colleague, Nathan Jones. It is a very vivid illustration of Peter Stoner's point about Jesus fulfilling just eight prophecies. Here, now, is that video.

Nathan Jones: I'm Nathan Jones with your Bible Prophecy Insight. Can math prove the accuracy of Bible prophecy? Well let's start with just 8 of the 108 prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' life. Mathematician Peter Stoner calculated that the probability of all 8 being fulfilled in the life of one person is 1 in 10 to the 17th power. That's 17 zeros! That would be like filling the entire state of Texas two feet deep in quarters. Mark just one, throw it in. The odds would be like walking for days and then the very first coin picked up that would be the one with the mark. Impossible, right? Well, not if the Bible is truly God's Word. To learn more about Bible prophecy visit us at lamblion.com.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, folks, we have presented a lot of scientific evidence that validates the Bible as the Word of God, and Jesus as the Son of God. There is also a lot of other evidence that affirms the Christian faith. The point I am trying to make is that the Christian faith is not a blind faith. It is a faith based on evidence: historical evidence, archeological evidence, logical evidence, scientific evidence, and the evidence of radically changed lives. The crucial question is what are you going to do with this evidence? I ask that question because it is evidence that demands a verdict. Are you going to accept it and take a leap of faith? Or, are you going to just shrug your shoulders and write it off to coincidence? I believe the evidence is overwhelming, and I have chosen to accept in faith that the Bible is the Word of God and Jesus is the Son of God. I challenge you to do likewise, to reach out in faith and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, so that God can touch and change your life and seal you for eternal life.

Well, folks, that's our program for this week. I pray it has been a blessing to you, and I pray you'll be back with us next week, the Lord willing. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program