Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me - John 5:39. The word "Scriptures" in this passage refers to the Old Testament. Christ is saying that in the Old Testament we will find the prophecies referring to Himself. It is therefore in these prophecies, and their fulfillment, that we may look if we wish to find evidence that Christ is the Messiah, the Son of God, the savior of mankind, and everything else which was prophesied of Him, and which He claimed to be. If we find these prophecies to be fulfilled in Christ, we will establish not only that Christ is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament, but that those prophecies were given by God Himself. For if they were not given by God, no man would have fulfilled any number of them.

The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship at Pasadena City College sponsored a class in Christian evidences. One section of this class was to consider the evidence produced by fulfilled prophecies referring to the first advent of Christ. The students were asked to be very conservative in their estimates. They discussed each prophecy, bringing out various conditions which might affect the probability of any man fulfilling it. We considered the following eight prophecies:

1. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlast-ing" (Micah 5:2).

This prophecy predicts that the Christ is to be born in Bethlehem. Since this is the first prophecy to be considered there are no previously set restrictions, so our question is: One man in how many, the world over, has been born in Bethlehem?

The best estimate which we can make comes from the attempt to find out the average population of Bethlehem, from Micah down to the present time, and divide it by the average population of the earth during the same period. One member of the class was an assistant in the library so he was assigned to get this information. He reported at the next meeting that the best determination of the ratio that he could determine was one to 280,000. Since the probable population of the earth has averaged less than two billion, the population of Bethlehem has averaged less than 7,150. Our answer may be expressed in the form that one man in 7,150/2,000,000,000 or one man in $2.8 \times 10^5$ was born in Bethlehem.

2. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me" (Mal. 3:1).

Our question is: Of the men who have been born in Bethlehem, one man in how many has had a forerunner prepare his way? John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ. But since there appears to be no difference between the people born in Bethlehem and those born any other place in the world, the question can just as well be general: One man in how many, the world over, has had a forerunner to prepare his way?

The students said the prophecy apparently referred to a special messenger of God, whose duty was to prepare the way for the work of Christ, so there is a further restriction added. The students agreed on one in 1,000 as being conservative. Most thought the estimate should be much larger. We will use the estimate as 1 in $10^3$.

3. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation: lowly, and riding upon ... a colt the foal of a donkey" (Zech. 9:9).

Our question then is: One man in how many, who was born in Bethlehem and had a forerunner, entered Jerusalem as a king riding on a colt the foal of an donkey? This becomes so restrictive that we considered an equivalent question: One man in how many, who has entered Jerusalem as a ruler, has entered riding on a colt the foal of a donkey? The students said this was a very hard thing to place an estimate on. They knew of no one but Christ who had so entered. The students thought that at least in modern times any one entering Jerusalem as a king would use a more dignified means. They agreed to place an estimate of 1 in $10^4$. We will use 1 in $10^2$.

4. "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends"(Zech. 13:6).

Christ was betrayed by Judas, one of His disciples, causing Him to be put to death, wounds being made in His hands. There seems to be no relation between the fulfillment of this prophecy and those which we have previously considered. We may then ask the question: One man in how many, the world over, has been betrayed by a friend, and that betrayal has resulted in his being wounded in his hands? The students said that it was very rare to be betrayed by a friend, and still rarer for the betrayal to involve wounding in the hands.

One in 1,000 was finally agreed upon, though most of the students would have preferred a larger number. So we will use the 1 in $10^3$.

5. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver" (Zech. 11:12).

The question is very simple: Of people who have been betrayed, one in how many has been betrayed for exactly thirty pieces of silver? The students thought this extremely rare and set their estimate as one in 10,000, or 1 in $10^4$. We will us 1 in $10^3$.

6. "And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zech. 11:13).

This is extremely specific. All thirty pieces of silver are not to be returned. They are to be cast down in the house of the Lord, and they are to go to the potter. Judas in remorse tried to return the thirty pieces of silver, but the chief priest would not accept them. So Judas threw them down on the floor of the temple and went and hanged himself. The chief priest took the money and bought a field of the potter to bury strangers in. Our question: One man in how many, after receiving a bribe for betrayal of a friend, had returned the money, had it refused, had thrown it on the floor in the house of the Lord, and then had it used to purchase a field from the potter?

The students doubted there has been another incident involving all these items, but agreed on an estimate of one in 100,000. They were sure this was conservative. So we use the estimate as 1 in $10^5$.

7. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

One man in how many, after fulfilling the above prophecies, when he is oppressed and afflicted and is on trial for his life, though innocent, will make no defense for himself?

Again my students said they did not know that this had ever happened in any case other than Christ's. At least it is extremely rare, so they placed their estimate as one in 10,000 or 1 in $10^4$. We will use 1 in $10^3$.

8. "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet"(Ps. 22:16).

The Jews are still looking for the Christ; in fact, He might have come any time after these prophecies were written up to the present time, or even on into the future. So our question is: One man in how many, from the time of David on, has been crucified? After studying methods of execution down through the ages and their frequency, the students agreed to estimate this probability at one in 10,000 or 1 in $10^4$, which we will use.

If these estimates are fair, one man in how many, the world over, will fulfill all eight prophecies? This can be answered by applying our principles of probability. In other words, by multiplying all of our estimates together, or 1 in 2.8 x $10^5$ x $10^3$ x $10^2$ x $10^3$ x $10^5$ x $10^3$ x $10^4$. This gives 1 in 2.8 x $10^{28}$, where 28 means that we have 28 ciphers following the 2.8. Let us simplify and reduce the number by calling it 1 in $10^{28}$. Written out this number is 1 in 10,000,000,000,000,000, 000,000,000,000.

This is the answer to the question: One man in how many men has fulfilled these eight prophecies? But we are concerned with the question: What is the chance any man might have lived from the day of these prophecies down to the present and have fulfilled all eight? We can answer this question by dividing our $10^{28}$ by the total number of people who have lived since the time of these prophecies. The best information available indicates the number to be about 88 billion or 8.8 x $10^{10}$.

To simplify the computation let us call the number $10^{11}$. By dividing these two numbers we find that **the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in $10^{17}$.**

Let's visualize this. Suppose that we take $10^{17}$ silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover the state two feet deep. Mark one of these 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 it must be the marked one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? The same chance the prophets had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time**.** This means that the fulfillment of these eight prophecies proves God inspired the  prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one change in $10^{17}$ of being absolute.

Sometimes we weigh our chances in the business world, and say if an investment has nine chances in ten of being profitable, and only one chance in ten of being a failure, it is safe enough for us to make the investment. Whoever heard of an investment that had only one chance in $10^{17}$ of failure? The business world has no conception of such an investment. Yet we are offered this investment by God. By the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Savior we know, from only these eight prophecies which lack only 1 chance in $10^{17}$ of being an absolute proof, that that investment will yield the wonderful dividend of eternal life with Christ. Can anyone be so unreasonable as to reject Jesus Christ and pin his hope of eternal life on such a slim chance as finding the right silver dollar among this great mass, covering the whole state of Texas two feet deep? It does not seem possible, yet every man who rejects Christ is doing just that.

More than three hundred prophecies from the Old Testament which deal with the first advent of Christ have been listed. Every one of them was completely fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

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.

# THE CHRIST OF PROPHECY

### By Peter Stoner