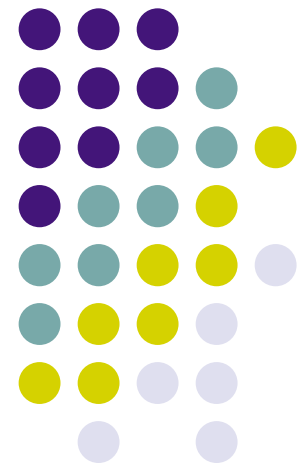


Prophecy, Probability & God

Robert C. Newman

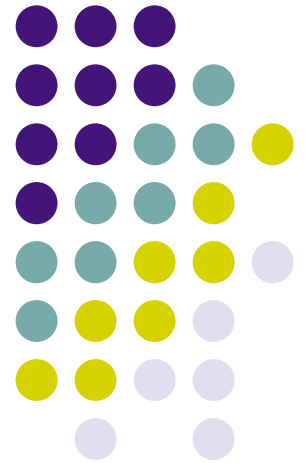




God?

- How does one attempt to decide whether God exists?
- And if God actually does exist, which religion/book (if any) is a revelation from God?
- Here we attempt to sketch some of the evidence from fulfilled prophecy that is provided by the Bible.
- This is only a part of the case for the truth of biblical Christianity.

The Prophecies & Their Fulfillments



A Light to the Gentiles



Isaiah 42:5-7 (NIV) This is what God the LORD says—he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: 6 "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, 7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."



A Light to the Gentiles

Isaiah 49:1-7 (NIV) Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. 2 He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. 3 He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." 4 But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God." 5 And now the LORD says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength— 6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." 7 This is what the LORD says—the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."



A Light to the Gentiles

- Before Jesus' time, most nations worshiped all sorts of gods; now almost half the world worships the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob. This is due to the influence of Jesus.
- Jesus is the only Jewish person since this prophecy was written who has founded a world religion of Gentiles.
- How likely is that?



The Time of the Messiah

Daniel 9:24-26 (NIV) Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. 25 Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. 26 After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.



The Time of the Messiah

- The Messiah (Anointed One) is to come and be cut off after 69 (i.e., 7 + 62) 'sevens.'
- The starting point is the command to build Jerusalem. According to Nehemiah 2, this is the 20th year of the Persian King Artaxerxes 1, which is 445 BC.
- The unit of measurement is the 'seven' (KJV 'week'), the 7-year sabbatical land-use cycle.



The Time of the Messiah

- The usual Jewish counting convention is inclusive:
 - Unit including starting point is counted as 1st unit
 - "After x units" means after xth unit has begun
- As we shall see, after 7 + 62 'sevens' works out to AD 28-35.
- See the chart on next slide.

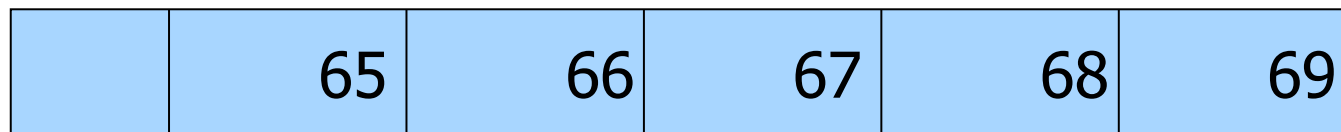


The Time of the Messiah

449 ↓ 442 435 428 421 414 407 BC



... AD 7 14 21 28 † 35



↓ Artaxerxes' decree, 445 BC

† Jesus' crucifixion, 30 AD



The Time of the Messiah

- Jesus was 'cut off' by a religious trial & subsequent Roman execution about AD 30, certainly between AD 28 and 35.
- Liberal interpretations (which claim this was a fake prophecy written after the event for the Maccabean period) are off by many years.
- So the only Jewish person who started a world religion (& claimed to be the Messiah) was cut off at the right time!



Israel's Future

- The first part of the prophecy of Hosea 1-3 involves Hosea living out an acted parable, in which he represents God, and his unfaithful wife Gomer represents Israel.
- After she abandons Hosea, he is to buy her back for many days but not to have sexual relations with her.
- So God will have Israel for many days without the usual relations between them.



Israel's Future

Hosea 3:3-5 (NIV) Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you." 4 For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. 5 Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days.



Israel's Future

- So Israel is for many days to be without:
 - King or prince,
 - Sacrifice or sacred pillar,
 - Ephod or idol.
- The Hebrew word 'prince' is broader than our translation, more like 'government official.'
- The ephod is a garment worn by the high priest.
- What has happened to Israel since Hosea wrote these words, some centuries before the time of Jesus?



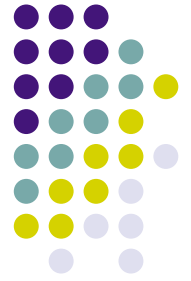
Israel's Future

- King or prince:
 - Israel has had no king since 587 BC (Davidic king) or since AD 44 (Jewish king of any sort).
 - No 'prince' since AD 70 (until 1948)
- Sacrifice or sacred pillar:
 - No sacrifice since AD 70
 - No pillar since perhaps 500 BC
- Ephod or idol:
 - Israel has had no priesthood since AD 70.
 - No idols since about 500 BC



Israel's Future

- Thus this passage has predicted six very significant sociological features of the Jewish nation for centuries.
- They have been without their God-ordained government, or any national government.
- They have been without their Sinai-religion and without idolatry, which was such a problem for centuries.
- How likely would these have been?



Twin Cities

- In scientific and medical research, investigators sometimes use controls.
 - E.g., some patients get the real medicine being tested, others just get a placebo.
- Here we consider biblical predictions about a number of 'twin cities,' which have very different predictions made about them, but are otherwise very similar. We could not have switched the names and had good predictions.



Twin Cities

These cities are:

- Memphis & Thebes: two of ancient Egypt's national capitals
- Tyre & Sidon: two of the major Phoenician city-states and maritime trading centers
- Babylon & Nineveh: capital cities of the two major world empires of the first millennium BC
- Capernaum & Nazareth: two cities of Galilee at the time of Jesus

Memphis & Thebes



Ezekiel 30:13-16 (NIV) This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

"I will destroy the idols and put an end to the images in Memphis. No longer will there be a prince in Egypt, and I will spread fear throughout the land. 14 I will lay waste Upper Egypt, set fire to Zoan and inflict punishment on Thebes. 15 I will pour out my wrath on Pelusium, the stronghold of Egypt, and cut off the hordes of Thebes. 16 I will set fire to Egypt; Pelusium will writhe in agony. Thebes will be taken by storm; Memphis will be in constant distress."



Memphis & Thebes

- Ezekiel predicts that God will:
 - Destroy the idols of Memphis,
 - Cut off the hordes of Thebes.
- In the centuries that followed Ezekiel's prophecy:
 - The site of Memphis became a quarry for constructing nearby Cairo, built by the Muslims, who hated idols.
 - Thebes was reduced from being a major city to a few small villages.
- No good if names in the prophecies were switched:
 - Many idols have been found at Thebes,
 - Virtually none at Memphis.

Tyre



Ezek 26:3-8 (NIV) therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. 4 They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. 5 Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations, 6 and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD. 7 For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army. 8 He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp up to your walls and raise his shields against you.

Tyre



Ezek 26:9-14 (NIV) He will direct the blows of his battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons. 10 His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the war horses, wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city whose walls have been broken through. 11 The hoofs of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground. 12 They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. 13 I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more. 14 I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD.

Sidon

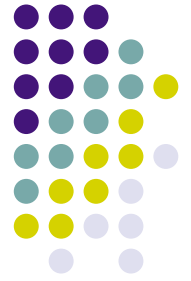


Ezek 28:22 (NIV) and say:
This is what the Sovereign LORD says:
I am against you, O Sidon,
and I will gain glory within you.
They will know that I am the LORD,
when I inflict punishment on her
and show myself holy within her.
23 I will send a plague upon her
and make blood flow in her streets.
The slain will fall within her,
with the sword against her on every side.
Then they will know that I am the LORD.



Tyre & Sidon

- Ezekiel predicts for Tyre:
 - Tyre's rubble will be thrown into the sea.
 - It will become a place for spreading nets.
 - It will never be rebuilt.
- Ezekiel predicts for Sidon:
 - Sidon will face war and disaster.
 - Nothing is said about it being abandoned and never rebuilt.



Tyre & Sidon

- The fulfillments:
 - Mainland Tyre was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, but much of its population escaped to offshore Tyre.
 - Alexander scraped the rubble from mainland Tyre and cast it into the sea build a causeway to take offshore Tyre.
 - Tyre is abandoned today, a place for spreading fishnets.
 - Sidon has several times been taken and badly damaged, but it is still a major seaport today.
- The names could not be switched and still give fulfillments.

Babylon



Isaiah 13:19-22 (NIV) Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. 20 She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there. 21 But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. 22 Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged.

Babylon



Jeremiah 51:24-26 (NIV) "Before your eyes I will repay Babylon and all who live in Babylonia for all the wrong they have done in Zion," declares the LORD. 25 "I am against you, O destroying mountain, you who destroy the whole earth," declares the LORD. "I will stretch out my hand against you, roll you off the cliffs, and make you a burned-out mountain. 26 No rock will be taken from you for a cornerstone, nor any stone for a foundation, for you will be desolate forever," declares the LORD.

Nineveh



Zephaniah 2:13-15 (NIV) He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate and dry as the desert. 14 Flocks and herds will lie down there, creatures of every kind. The desert owl and the screech owl will roost on her columns. Their calls will echo through the windows, rubble will be in the doorways, the beams of cedar will be exposed. 15 This is the carefree city that lived in safety. She said to herself, "I am, and there is none besides me." What a ruin she has become, a lair for wild beasts! All who pass by her scoff and shake their fists.

Babylon & Nineveh



- Prophecies:
 - Babylon
 - To be deserted
 - Without Arabs or shepherds
 - To be a home for wild animals
 - Its stone not to be used for building stone
 - Never to be rebuilt
 - Nineveh
 - To be destroyed and left desolate
 - To become a place for grazing sheep

Babylon & Nineveh



- Fulfillments:
 - Babylon
 - Has become deserted over the centuries, partly by conquest, partly by shift in river, leaving site without water.
 - Arabs avoid site as haunted.
 - Soil is too poor even for grazing sheep.
 - Natives use clay bricks from site, but burn stone to lime.
 - Nineveh
 - Was destroyed suddenly & completely; location forgotten for centuries.
 - Name of largest mound (Quyuniq) means "many sheep."
 - Recently suburbs of Mosul have grown out to reach site.



Capernaum & Nazareth

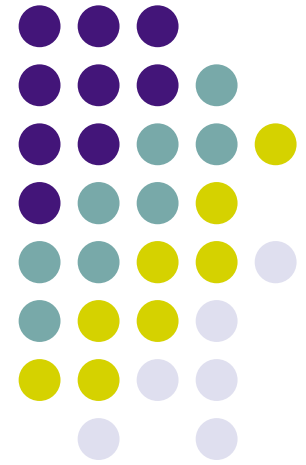
Matthew 11:20-24 (NIV) Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. 21 "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."



Capernaum & Nazareth

- Capernaum, Korazin, and Bethsaida are cursed with destruction for not repenting at Jesus' miracles.
- No such curse on Nazareth, even though some of its people tried to kill Jesus (Luke 4:14-30).
- Today, Capernaum, Korazin and Bethsaida are abandoned, only recently rediscovered.
- Nazareth is a prosperous city, much larger than in Jesus' time.
- If one were to switch the names in the prophecies, they would not have been fulfilled.

Calculating the Probabilities





Calculating the Probabilities

- Here we will attempt to calculate the probabilities of these things happening by accident.
- Our numbers need not be pressed; you may substitute your own.
- There are many more prophecies of this sort. See our bibliography.
- The compound probability = product of the partial probabilities multiplied together.



Light to the Gentiles

- How many major world religions?
 - 4 or 5
- What is the antecedent probability a Jew would be founder of one of these, given that they have their own religion?
 - Try fraction of Jews in world population, ~1%
- $P = 5 \times .01 = 5 \times 10^{-2}$



Time of the Messiah

- What is the chance that this founder is cut off in the first half of the first century AD?
 - 25 centuries since Daniel's time
 - To get right half-century, 1:50
 - Founder cut off (death by formal execution), 1:10
 - $P = 1:50 \times 10 = 1:500 = 2 \times 10^{-3}$
- Alternatively, chance of Daniel hitting right sabbath-cycle plus cutting off?
 - # sabbath-cycles (N): 70? 100? 350?
 - $P = 1:N \times 10 = 1:700, 1:1000, 1:3500?$ Take $N = 100$.
 - $P = 1 \times 10^{-3}$



Israel's Future

- Given Israel's survival (which is itself a fulfillment of other prophecies):
 - Many days without king: 1:2
 - Without prince (govt official): 1:10
 - Without sacrifice: 1:10
 - Without pillar: 1:2
 - Without ephod: 1:10
 - Without idols: 1:2
- Total P = 1:8000 = 1.25×10^{-4}



Twin Cities

- Memphis & Thebes:
 - Images cease: 1:10
 - Depopulated: 1:2
- Tyre & Sidon
 - Many nations attack: 1:5
 - Scrape debris: 1:5
 - Throw in water: 1:10
 - Never rebuilt: 1:10



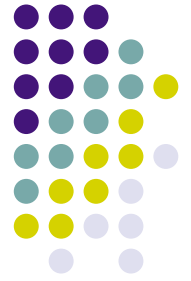
Twin Cities

- Babylon & Nineveh:
 - Never inhabited to date: 1:10
 - No Arab: 1:5
 - No shepherds: 1:2
 - No stone reused: 1:10
 - Destruction: 1:2
- Capernaum & Nazareth:
 - Capernaum, Korazin, Bethsaida destroyed: 1:8
 - Nazareth not: 1:2
- Total Twin Cities $P = 6.25 \times 10^{-10}$



Total Probability

- Various Probabilities
 - Light to Gentiles: 5×10^{-2}
 - Time of Messiah: 2×10^{-3}
 - Israel's Future: 1.25×10^{-4}
 - Twin Cities: 6.25×10^{-10}
- Total probability of getting these predictions right by guessing: $7.8 \times 10^{-18} \sim 1 \times 10^{-17}$
- That is 1 chance in 100 million billion!



Conclusions

- Fulfilled prophecy is strong evidence that not all religions or worldviews are equal.
- In fact, a series of prophecies about the end of the age and the second coming of Jesus appear even now to be in the process of being fulfilled, though this is difficult to be sure of as yet:
 - Return of Israel to its land
 - Threat of ecological disaster
 - Threat of famine, epidemics



Conclusions

- What will you do about it?
 - (1) Ignore this evidence and do what you want, hoping that if there is a God you'll be OK anyway?
 - (2) Pick out a religion you like, hoping God will believe you really were sincerely looking for the truth?
 - (3) Go where the evidence points, even if it means admitting that you've been ignoring God and rebelling against him all these years?

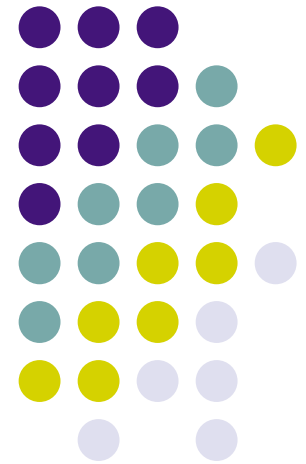


Conclusions

- We've got good news for you if you picked number (3)!
- God is willing to forgive you (and still do what is right and just):
 - He paid for our sins and provided the righteousness we lacked by means of the life & death of the God-man Jesus Christ.
 - We just need to come to God in prayer and ask him to forgive us and change us for Jesus' sake.

The End

Can be the beginning if you turn
back to God and trust in Jesus!





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