

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz Production
Week 2
Matthew 1, Luke 1

Before we jump into the New Testament there is some important information that we need to understand. The time span between Malachi and Matthew was approximately 400 years. This time period is known as the silent years. God in His wisdom ceases to speak to the nation of Israel as a whole. At least this is what the world thinks. The book of Mormon shows us that this was not the case on the American continent. The reason I bring this up is because this moment altered the entire world as we know it. For 4000 years since the time of Adam and Eve, Millions or even Billions have looked forward to the time when the Savior would be born. The whole purpose of the creation of this world was fulfilled in the small town of Bethlehem. This moment changed how we tell time, and we give tribute to God every time we write the date. No matter what a person's belief is about God and Jesus they have to admit that our entire world today revolves around the Creator of this universe and His sacrificial Son.

But, let's consider the argument for just a quick second. Because that is all it really merits. What if it was just by chance that Jesus was born at the right place at the right time. That it was just by chance that He was a great teacher and a threat to the regime of that day. What are the Odds? We have an entire book that we just studied all last year that predicted and prophesied of the coming of the Messiah. Nearly every prophet in detail described what it would be like when He is to come to this mortal sphere. Some scholars believe that there were over three hundred and thirty prophecies about Jesus. Some giving extremely detailed information about His life thousands of years before His birth.

In 1944 Peter Stoner wrote a book called Science Speaks. It has had several revisions since then and it is terribly difficult to find any copy of it. Professor Stoner was a Mathematician and chairman of the departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena city college until 1953 when he was snatched up by Westmont College from 1953-1957 there he was Professor Emeritus of science. In his book he and 600 of his students calculated the probability of someone fulfilling any single prophecy from the Bible, specifically the Old Testament. In the beginning of his book he literally proves with Math and Science that the Bible is true and written at the hand of God. This is what he says in the Preface:

“Today, if our young people are properly taught in the churches, there is no possible excuse for losing their faith in college, for everything that they study in the physical sciences will speak of the unerring truth of the bible. If they will stop to consider, it will prove to them that God alone could have been the Author of the Bible.”

But what I want to focus on today is the third section where they calculate the odds of someone fulfilling the prophecies of Christ.

To begin Stoner takes 8 of the most well known prophecies, such as:

- The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. (Malachi 5:2)
- That He would have a forerunner to prepare the way for Him. (Malachi 3:1)
- That He would enter Jerusalem riding on the back of a colt. (Zech 9:9)
- That He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. (Zech 13:6, 11:12)

And so on:

“If these estimates are considered fair, one man in how many men, the world over, will fulfill all eight prophecies? This question can be answered by applying our principles of probability.”

“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} . [That is 1 with 17 zeros after it.]

“Let us try to visualize this chance. If you mark one of ten tickets, and place all of the tickets in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten. Suppose that we take 10^{17} [we would take] silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will 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? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom.

Now these prophecies were either given by inspiration of God or the prophets just wrote them as they thought they should be. In such a case the prophets had just one chance in 10^{17} of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ.

This means that the fulfillment of these eight prophecies alone proves that God inspired the writing of those prophecies to a definiteness which lacks only one change in 10^{17} of being absolute.”

He then goes on to Calculate 8 more prophecies for a total of 16. What are the odds of One man fulfilling 16 prophecies? 1 in 10^{45}

“Take this number of silver dollars. If you make these into a solid ball, you will have a great sphere with a center at the earth, and extending in all directions more than 30 times as far as from the earth to the sun. (If a train had started from the earth at the time the Declaration of Independence was signed, and had traveled steadily toward the sun at the rate of sixty miles per hour, day and night, it would be about reaching its destination today. But remember that our ball of silver dollars extends thirty times that far in all directions.) If you can imagine the marking of one silver dollar, and then thoroughly stirring it into this great ball, and blindfolding a man and telling him to pick out one dollar, and expect it to be the marked one, you have somewhat of a picture of how absolutely the fulfillment of sixteen prophecies referring to Jesus Christ proves both that He is the Son of God and that our Bible is inspired. Certainly God directed the writing of His Word.”

He then goes farther than that to consider forty-eight prophecies. The odds are 1 in 10^{157} . Silver dollars are too large to consider in this calculation so he used electrons, about the smallest object that is known in this world. He says that if you were to line up electrons in a straight line that is 1 inch long, and you counted 250 electrons each minute day and night it would take you 19 million years to count just 1 inch line of electrons.

It is believed that our solar system is approximately 1.5 Million light years in length. Now picture if you can the distance of six-billion light years and you send someone out blind folded to pick out 1 specific electron in that span of space the odds of him finding that one exact electron are 1 in 10^{157} .

And that is just considering 48 prophecies, our minds couldn't even fathom any number that would represent the odds of Jesus fulfilling 300 plus prophecies while here on this earth.

Yet with all that proof it doesn't mean a thing to us if we don't have a personal relationship with Him who came to save.

Our time is short and I did want to point out one thing in regards to the scriptures we are studying this week. You may be asking yourself why in the world would we start out the New Testament with a genealogy of Jesus. Isn't that stuff that we usually skip over when we come to it in our scriptures? Well, I hope you don't because there is a great lesson contained there.

Consider the names of each individual and who they were in their life. Let me show you a few examples. It starts with Abraham:

Abraham was a liar: He lied twice about being married to his wife Sariah in order to save his own life.

Jacob was a deceiver: His name literally means in Hebrew the deceiver. He tricked his brother out of his birthright and he and his mother deceived his father Issac into giving him the Essas blessing.

Solomon was a woman-izer and had over 700 wives and 300 concubines.

Ruth was a Moabite, a descendent of a people known for incest.

David, Oh King David has a laundry list of sins from adultery to murder.

Rahab was also known as "Rahab the Harlot".

And the list goes on and on. But what does it all mean?

Typically when someone recalls their lineage they like to focus on the good ones that represent success and status in their life. It helps us to feel as if we are important and that we come from a line of important people, it's in our blood. We also tend to leave out those that left a stain, we tuck them away in the back of the pages of our history.

But here it seems to emphasize the worst of the worst in Jesus's lineage. And I believe that is for a purpose. Some have a hard time picturing themselves in the family of Christ. They feel like a misfit, or an outcast. I think all of us at some point in our lives feel or have felt like that. The message that we can pull from the opening verses of one of the greatest books of all time is that God and Jesus want all of us to be part of their family, flaws and all. We will study soon how the sarducees and the Pharisees criticized Jesus for hanging out with sinners and publicans. Little did they know that that would define all of us from the beginning of time to the end of the world. We are all sinners that fall short of the Glory of God and the sooner we realize this the sooner we can let go of the pride that grips so many of us.

I was speaking to a good friend of mine the other day who said to me "I just don't feel like I belong at church". She then went on to tell me all the reasons that she feels inadequate to be there. I tried to explain to her that the church is not a museum for the saints but a hospital for

the sick. And if you feel like you are not sick, well, that is the number one symptom of a bad case of pride. My Grandpa always said to me when he saw me coming down with a case of “the prides” that the remedy was a big slice of humble pie, and he was always ready and willing to dish it up for me.

The point I'm trying to make is the same one that Matthew and Luke are making. That we are all part of the family of Christ, no matter who we are, where we came from, or what we have done. He stands ready and willing to accept us for who we are and to show us what we are capable of becoming. I love the line from a modern Christian song that says:

I saw a prodigal and He saw a son
I saw the 99 and He saw the one.
(I see grace: Micah Tyler)

As we begin our study of the New Testament might we remember how important these events are. How important He was in the history of the world and how important He still is in our world today.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.