

The Deity of Jesus Christ 2003

The purpose of this course is to equip the student with faith-building evidences of Jesus Christ. Students are expected to attend each class and to participate. Students will receive a take-home examination July 12 to be completed and returned July 19. A term paper of four to five pages on an approved topic is required. Students should write their term papers according to the form provided in class. Term papers are due July 12.

1. The Titles of Jesus Christ
2. Claims of Jesus Christ
3. The Historicity of Jesus
4. Messianic Prophecies of Jesus
5. Miracles of Jesus
6. The Prophecies Jesus Made
7. Resurrection of Jesus
Take-home test
8. The Moral Character of Jesus

Select Bibliography for further study:

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Titles of Jesus Christ

Messiah / Christ These two equivalent titles both mean "anointed one," from the Hebrew verb *MASHAH* ("to anoint, smear with oil, pour oil over someone"), and the Greek verb *criw* (same def.). Many different people were called "anointed":

OT: "Messiah" was frequently used for *currently reigning* kings, and less often for a high priest, patriarch, or prophet. The title was applied to an expected *future* "anointed" leader only in Dan 9:25 and in later writings from Qumran.

NT: A transliteration of the Hebrew *MESSIAS* is used *only* in John 1:41 & 4:25. Everywhere else the NT always uses the Greek translation *xristoj* ("Christ"). In the NT, the title refers only to Jesus, fairly often in the Gospels (7 Mk; 16 Mt; 12 Lk; 19 Jn), and very frequently in Paul's letters (382 times). Paul even uses "Christ Jesus," "Jesus Christ," or "Christ" alone as if it were a proper name. In Luke 4:18, Jesus quotes the scripture: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because *he has anointed me* to preach good news to the poor..." Christians later used the Chi-Rho (first two letters of "Christ" in Greek) as a monogram for Jesus.

Lord / LORD

Originally it was a title of respect used for people superior to yourself, so it simply meant "Sir" or "Master," just like *Señor* in Spanish, *Herr* in German, or "Lords and Ladies" in British. Later it is often also used for gods or God.

OT: The Hebrew title *ADONAI* simply means "lord" or "master," and is often used for humans and/or for God. Although God's name in Hebrew (YHWH) is *very often written* in the Bible, it was *rarely pronounced* after the Babylonian exile. Instead, people substituted the title *Adonai*. To distinguish between the two uses of *Adonai*, many English Bibles print this title in small capitals (LORD) when it substitutes for God's name, and in regular letters (Lord) otherwise.

NT: The Greek word *kuriōj* is very frequent (80 Mt; 18 Mk; 104 Lk; 52 Jn; 107 Acts; 274 Paul; 717 total), with a variety of meanings. It sometimes refers to God or to humans, but usually to Jesus. Some people (esp. foreigners) call Jesus *kuriē* simply as a sign of respect ("Sir" - Mk 7:28; Jn 4:11; etc.), while his disciples usually refer to him as their "master"; in later texts, calling Jesus "Lord" is an indication of his messianic or divine status (Acts 2:34-36). In Luke, the disciples also address Jesus as an *Epistates* ("master") seven times (5:5; 8:24 [twice], 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13). In Paul, "the Lord" is often a substitute for Jesus' name. Note also "the Lord's Day" (Rev 1:10) and "the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor 11:20).

Holy One

Originally a common circumlocution for God (a phrase used to avoid speaking God's name), it is later also applied as a title for Jesus or other "saints."

OT: In the singular, "Holy One" always and only refers to God (1Sam 2:2; Job

6:10; etc.), often also called "Holy One of Israel" (2Kgs 19:2; Isa 1:4; etc.). In the plural, "holy ones" can also refer to human or angelic beings that are close to God (Deut 33:2-3; Ps 16:3; 34:9; etc.)

NT: Jesus is called the "Holy One of God" by unclean spirits (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34) and by Peter (John 6:69). Acts 2:27 and 13:35 quote Ps 16 to call Jesus the "Holy One"; and the title is also used of Jesus in Acts 3:14; 1John 2:20; Rev 3:7; 16:5.

I AM

In the Hebrew Bible, God's name (YHWH) means something close to "I am" (see Exod 3:14; 6:2-3; Deut 32:39; Isa 43:25; 51:12; etc.; cf. Matt 22:32). In the Synoptic Gospels this phrase is used only a few times by Jesus (Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70; 24:39), especially when Jesus walks on the water (Mark 6:50; Matt 14:27; cf. John 6:20), a story that functions as a "theophany" (appearance of a god). Messianic pretenders may also deceive people by saying "I am" (Mark 13:6; Matt 24:5; Luke 21:8). In John's Gospel, Jesus himself says "I Am" (Greek *ei]mi*) fifty-four times. Twenty-four of these are emphatic (explicitly including the pronoun "EGO" for "I"), including some well known metaphorical images, when Jesus calls himself the bread of life, the light of the world, the door, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way and the truth and the life, and the true vine.

Son of God / God's Son

When Jesus called himself the Son of God and stated that He and the Father are one, the Jews took this as blasphemous. Calling Himself the Son of God meant that He was claiming to be Divine (John 10:30-36). In the model prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father," signifying a special relationship with God. One does not have to be Divine to call God "Father," but Jesus is uniquely God's Son.

OT: In the singular or plural, God's "son" or "sons" can refer to angels (Gen 6:2), kings (Ps 2:7), good people (Wis 2:18), or the people of Israel overall (Exod 4:22), but it did not refer to a messianic figure until the 1st century BC, nor did it imply divinity.

NT: Jesus referred to God as *Abba* ("Father") and frequently referred to Himself as the Son. In Mark, only the Evangelist (1:1), unclean/ demonic spirits (3:11; 5:7), and a Roman centurion (15:39) directly call Jesus "Son of God," while the voice from heaven (1:11; 9:7), more demons (1:24), and the high priest (14:61) use *equivalent expressions* ("my beloved Son"; "Son of the Blessed One"; etc.). In Mt & Lk these titles for Jesus are also used by Satan, the Holy Spirit, or Jesus' disciples, while Jesus himself calls some of his followers "sons/children of God" (Mt 5:9; Lk 20:36). Paul calls Jesus the "Son of God," and calls all Christians "sons/children of God" in a few important passages (esp. Rom & Gal). John has much more "Father/Son" language, and is the first to call Jesus the "*only-Son*" of God (Gk. *monogevhj monogenes*, lit. "the only-begotten one"; Jn 3:16, 18; cf. 1:14, 18; 1John 4:9; similarly also Heb 1:5; 5:5).

Son of Man

Originally emphasizing someone's humanity, this title is later also used for a powerful heavenly figure.

OT: Used 93 times in Ezekiel and only 13 times in the rest of the OT (translated "mortal" in NRSV), it usually refers to *human* beings in contrast to God or angels, but it could also highlight the prophet's role as a special *representative* of the people. Daniel 7:13 is the only OT text where this phrase describes a *heavenly* figure nearly equivalent to God in power and authority; in later Jewish apocalyptic literature, the "Son of Man" is a figure of divine *judgement*.

NT: Used 85 times, mostly in the four Gospels (14 Mk, 30 Mt, 25 Lk, 13 Jn) and almost always by Jesus referring to himself, but with various meanings. Some "Son of Man" sayings refer to the *human* activity of Jesus (as in Ezekiel), while others refer to his future role in divine *judgment* (as in Daniel 7; cf. Rev 1:13). Brand new is Jesus' use of "Son of Man" when he is telling his disciples about his upcoming *suffering and death* (esp. Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33).

Son of David

Originally refers literally to descendants of the most famous king of ancient Israel, but as a title it later has several meanings.

OT: David had many sons (2 Sam 3), the most famous being Solomon, who succeeded him as king (2 Sam 11-12; 1 Kgs 1-2). In 2 Sam 7:8-16, God (through the prophet Nathan) promises that the Davidic royal dynasty will last forever, but after the Babylonian exile most Jewish rulers were not from David's family. Since King Herod was not, many people around the time of Jesus wanted another "Son of David" to become king again.

NT: As a title, "Son of David" (usually referring to Jesus) is not used very often (3 Mk, 10 Mt, 4 Lk, 0 Jn), although "David" is mentioned 56 times total. In Mark & Luke, the phrase seems to refer *not* to royal power, but rather to the magical/healing power for which Solomon was famous (e.g. Mark 10:46-52). Only Matthew uses this more often and more clearly as a messianic title with royal connotations (already in 1:1, also 12:23; 21:9; etc.). Matthew also stresses Jesus' Jewish heritage by calling him "Son of Abraham" (1:1).

Son of Mary

As explained in the introduction above, most people in the ancient world did not have "last names," but were identified by their geographical origin ("Jesus of Nazareth"; "the Galilean"), or their occupation ("the carpenter"), or their fathers ("the son of Joseph"; "the carpenter's son"). Women were usually identified through the closest male relative (daughter of..., wife of..., mother of...), but identifying a man through his mother ("Jesus, the son of Mary" - Mark 6:3; cf. Matt 13:55) is rather unusual. "Son of Mary" did not become an important title for Jesus until later centuries, when Church Councils defined Jesus' two-fold nature ("fully human and fully divine"). Although "Son of Mary" seems to emphasize Jesus' human nature (with "Son of God" expressing his divine nature), Christian theology later defined Mary as "Mother of God" (*THEOTOKOS*), not just

mother of the human side of Jesus. This title, "Mother of God," exalts Mary to a place, where Scripture never intended. It is idolatrous.

King of the Jews / King of Israel

Obviously a title connoting the political and military leadership of the Jewish people.

OT: From the 18th to 11th centuries, the Hebrews were a loose confederation of "tribes," not a monarchy. God was considered their king. The first human "kings" were Saul, David, and Solomon. Thereafter the "Kings of Israel" and the "Kings of Judah" ruled over separate realms. After the Babylonian exile, "Judah" was usually called "Judea," the land of the "Jews." The exact title "King of the Jews" is not used in the OT, but obviously there were many "kings" over the people.

NT: The phrase "King of the Jews" is only applied to Jesus, once at his birth (Matt 2:2) and 17 times at his trial and crucifixion (Mark 15:2, and in all 4 Gospels, but only by opponents). Jesus is also called "King of Israel" four times (Matt 27:42; Mark 15:32; John 1:49; 12:13). Jesus himself refuses to be made king (Matt 4:8-10; John 6:15), but often speaks of the "Kingdom of God" and uses kings as characters in his parables. The inscription placed on the cross above Jesus' head said "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" (John 19:19; cf. Mark 15:26; Matt 27:11-37; Luke 3-38), from which is derived the common abbreviation **INRI** (from the Latin "**I**esus **N**azare**n**us **R**ex **I**udaeorum").

Prophet

A "prophet" is *not* primarily someone who "predicts" the future, but rather is a chosen messenger or *representative* of God, whose role is to speak God's words and to perform some miraculous and/or symbolic actions for the people to see.

OT: The most important early prophets are Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 16 -- 2 Kings 9), who both perform many miracles. The four major prophetic books are attributed to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The OT also promises that "a prophet like Moses" will appear (Deut 18:15-18) and/or the prophet "Elijah will return" (Mal 4:5-6) in the last days.

NT: The OT prophets often mentioned and quoted, esp. in Matthew. Both John the Baptist and Jesus are appropriately considered "prophets," because of their speech and actions, even though they have very different styles. Jesus is also considered a great prophet by many people (Mk 6:14-16; 8:28; Mt 21:11; Lk 7:16; 24:19; Jn 6:14; etc.).

Rabbi / Rabboni / Teacher

Hebrew and Aramaic words meaning "my master" in general, or "my teacher" in particular. They were not used as titles in OT times, but were common titles of respect by the time of Jesus, especially but not only for teachers.

A Greek transliteration of the *Hebrew* "Rabbi" occurs only in the Gospels (3 Mk, 4 Mt, 0 Lk, 8 Jn), while a transliteration of the *Aramaic* "Rabboni" occurs only in Mark 10:51 and John 20:16. Both titles are explicitly translated in John as

meaning "teacher" (1:38; 20:16), and both are almost always applied to Jesus (except Matt 23:7-8, where Jesus talks about people being called "rabbi", and in John 3:26, where John the Baptist is called "rabbi"; cf. Luke 3:12). These titles are used almost exclusively by his own disciples (Peter, Judas, etc.), or by a few minor characters (Bartimaeus, Nicodemus, or the "crowd" in general).

The NT frequently also uses the equivalent *Greek* word *didaskaloi* (meaning "teacher" - 12 Mk, 12 Mt, 17 Lk, 8 Jn), usually when Jesus is addressed by various people (disciples and opponents), but sometimes in Jesus' own sayings about "teachers" (see esp. Matt 10:24-25; 23:6-12). Outside of the Gospels, some early Christian leaders are also called "teachers" (Acts 13:1; Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11; etc.)

Savior

A title originally used for God or any human being who would "save" people from present or future dangers. In Greco-Roman politics, this title was also often applied to the emperor as a "benefactor," providing material benefits.

OT: "Savior" is sometimes applied to human leaders (e.g. Neh 9:27), but is used mainly as a title for God (*ca.* 12 times).

NT: The title is rarely used in most NT writings (0 Mk, 0 Mt, 3 Lk, 1 Jn, 2 Acts, 1 Paul), but is more common in the later epistles (25 times). In Luke, "Savior" only once refers to God (Luke 1:47), and twice to the new-born Jesus (1:67, 2:11). The longer phrase "Savior of the world" occurs only in John 4:42 and 1 John 4:14. However, as mentioned in the introduction above, the name "Jesus" (or "Joshua" or "Yeshua") itself means "God saves" (cf. Matt 1:21). Also, the verb "to save" is frequently applied to Jesus' ministry (cf. Matt 8:25; Mark 13:13; Luke 7:50; John 3:17; etc.).

The ancient symbol at the right contains abbreviations for the name "Jesus" and "Christ" (the first and last letters of each word in Greek), along with the verb "NIKA", meaning "to conquer, win, be victorious"; thus the phrase means "Jesus Christ is victorious".

Suffering Servant

The combination "suffering servant" is not really a biblical title, but a scholarly shorthand for the servant of God who suffers much (see the "Servant Songs" of Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12), or any righteous person who suffers (even if not explicitly called a "servant" in Ps 22, which is quoted in Mark 15:34). Jesus often speaks of himself and his disciples as "servants" (Mark 9:35; 10:42-45; John 13:1-20; Acts 3:13-26; etc.), and also often speaks of the necessity of his upcoming suffering (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32; and par.). Matthew quotes and applies Isa 42 to Jesus (Matt 12:18-21), while Peter several times refers to the crucified and risen Jesus as God's servant (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30).

Emmanuel / Immanuel

A Hebrew *name* occurring in the NT only in Matt 1:23 (citing the LXX version of Isa 7:14), where it is correctly translated as meaning "God is with us." This OT prophetic text connects God's saving *presence* among his people with the birth of a child (Isa 7:13-17; cf. 8:1-10). Although it did not refer to a miraculous virgin birth in its original 8th-century BC context, it was applied by early Christians (such as the author of Matthew) to the birth of Jesus. Matthew also explicitly connects the name "Emmanuel" with the name "Jesus," which means "God saves" (1:21-23).

Logos / Word

Used as a Christological title only in John 1:1-18, but very common in later Christianity. The Greek word *logos* can refer not only to a single "word," but also to a "phrase," a "sentence," a "speech," or even the power of "reason" or the "mind." John's use of this title alludes especially to the OT story of God creating the world merely by speaking (Gen 1), while John's statement that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14) is somewhat similar to Matthew's use of the title "Emmanuel" (Mt 1:23).

Lamb of God

Used only in John 1:29, 36, as John the Baptist points to Jesus, this image became much more popular in later Christian art and in the Eucharist. In John it is related to the detail that Jesus' death occurs at the very same time that the Passover lambs were slaughtered in the Jerusalem Temple (John 19:28-42 - on the "Day of Preparation"), so Jesus himself replaces the sacrificial lambs, whose blood was necessary for the forgiveness of sins in the Jewish sacrificial system. The "lamb standing as if it had been slain" is also prominent in the Book of Revelation (5:6; and 30 times total).

Great High Priest

An official, one who offered sacrifices. In Judaism, all priests had to be from the Tribe of Levi, which Jesus was not. However, the Letter to the Hebrews calls Jesus a "great high priest" (4:14) of a different type, namely "according to the order of Melchizedek" (6:20). Melchizedek was the King of Salem (the city later called Jerusalem) at the time of Abraham (ca. 1800 BC), and is called "priest of God Most High" (cf. Gen 14:18-24).

Advocate / Paraclete

This title normally refers to the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), but 1 John says, "we have an *advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). In Greek, a "paraclete" *paraklhtoj* is someone "called to your side" to assist you in some way; thus some translations also say "comforter" or "consoler."

Alpha & Omega; First & Last

The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Both God and Jesus are called "the Alpha and the Omega," with the same meaning as "the first and the last" and/or "the beginning and the end" (Rev 1:8, 17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13).

Other Titles and Metaphorical Descriptions in the Bible:

- The bridegroom (Mark 2:19-20; Matt 9:15; Luke 5:34-35; John 3:29)
- The Son of Abraham (Matt 1:1)
- The judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42)

- The spiritual rock (1 Cor 10:1)
- The beloved (Eph 1:6)
- The cornerstone (Eph 2:20)
- The head of the church (Eph 5:23)
- The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15)
- The one mediator between God and humankind (1 Tim 2:5)
- The blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim 6:15; cf. Rev 19:16)
- The pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2)
- The shepherd and guardian of your souls (1 Peter 2:25)
- The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation (Rev 3:14; cf. 3:7)
- The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the root of David (Rev 5:5)

The root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star (Rev 22:16)

Twenty Six Claims of Jesus

9. To be the Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (Matt. 26:63-65; Mark 14:60-62; Luke 22:67-70; John 9:34,35).
10. To be the divine, eschatological Son of Man of Daniel 9 (considered blasphemous)
11. To be the Son of God (considered blasphemous) (Matt. 3:13; 17:1-5; John 1:49).
12. To be Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5).
13. To be able to forgive sins (considered blasphemous) (Mark 2:5-12; Luke 7:48)
14. To be an appropriate object of religious faith (Matt. 16:15-17; John 5:23; 8:24; 20:28)
15. To be the Heir to God (Matt. 28:18; John 3:35; Matt. 21:33-41)
16. To be greater than King David, Solomon, Jonah, the Temple (Matt. 12:3-8, 41,42; Luke 11:31,32)
17. To be 'owner' of the angels and the Elect (Matt. 13:41,42; Mark 13:26,27)
18. To speak eternally binding and existent sayings--own His OWN authority (Matt. 7:24-29; 24:35; John 12:48).
19. To be "able" to fulfill the OT scriptures (Matt. 5:17; Eph. 2:14-16; Heb. 8:6-13; 10:8-10).
20. To be the authoritative interpreter of the OT (Matt. 5:21,22, 27,28, 31,32, 33,34, 38,39, 43,44)
21. To be the issue upon which the eternal destinies depend (John 8:24; 12:48; 1 John 4:3).
22. To be worth higher loyalty and commitment than the family (Matt. 10:37).
23. To have EXCLUSIVE knowledge of the Father, and the SOLE 'dispenser' of that knowledge (John 1:18; 14:6-10; 1 John 5:20)
24. To send prophets (Matt. 23:34; Luke 11:49; John 16:12-14; 17:18-21)
25. To be omniscient (John 2:24,25; 13:10,11; Luke 22:31-34; John 21:15-17)
26. To be of equal status with the Father and the Spirit, and to share 'the Name' with them (Matt. 28:19; John 5:18; 10:30)
27. To be able to grant derivative authority over evil spirits (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1,2).

28. To be able to grant kingdom authority IN THE SAME WAY the FATHER does (Matt. 5:19,20; 7:21-23; 13:41-43; 16:17-19; 28:19)
29. To be "God" visiting them (as promised in messianic prophecies) (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23)
30. To be co-operative/interchangeable in some operations with the Spirit (John 14:25,26; 15:26,27; 16:7-15)
31. To have special knowledge of heavenly events (Luke 15:7,10; 16:19-31)
32. To have ALL authority in HEAVEN (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22)
33. To have authority over the Holy Spirit (John 3:34,35; 16:13-15)
34. To be omnipresent (Matt. 28:20; John 1:48)

C. S. Lewis said in his classic, Mere Christianity: "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come away with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

The Historicity of Jesus Christ Outside of the Writings of Believers

Cornelius Tacitus

The greatest Roman historian in the days of the Empire was Cornelius Tacitus (born between 52 and 54 A.D.). Writing about the reign of Nero (54-68 A.D.), he described the great fire which destroyed Rome in 64 A.D. and told of the rumor that Nero burned the city himself in order to gain greater glory in its rebuilding. In his Annals 15.44, Tacitus says:

Therefore, to scotch the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. Christus, from whom they got their name, had been executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor; and the pernicious superstition was checked for a short time, only to break out afresh, not only in Judea, the home of the plague, but in Rome itself, where all the horrible and shameful things in the world collect and find a home.

For Tacitus, Christus would have been considered a proper name; but to the Jews and for the first Christians, it referred to the Messiah. The Jews did not believe him to be the Messiah and would have referred to him merely as Jesus. It is thought that this

information came from a summary report from Pilate himself. It may sure be one of the ironies of history that the only mention Pilate receives from a Roman historian is in connection with the part he played in the execution of Jesus.

Tacitus makes a further reference to Christians in a fragment of his Histories, dealing with the burning of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D. This is preserved by Sulpicius Severus (Chron. 2.30.6).

Suetonius

Suetonius wrote of the lives of the first twelve Caesars in 120 A.D., from the life of Julius Caesar onward. In his Life of Nero (26.2), Suetonius says:

"Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition."

Another possible reference to Christianity occurs in Suetonius's Life of Claudius (25:4), of whom he says:

"As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."

This reference to the expelling from Rome (ca. 50 A.D.) can be also be found in Acts 18:2, "And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome." It is likely that the strife among the Roman Jews at that time was over the introduction of Jesus Christ. Suetonius wrongly infers that "Chrestus" (Christ) was actually in Rome at the time.

The prophecy of Agabus in Acts 11:28 is "that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius." Suetonius confirms this report in his Life of Cladius 18.2, where he mentions that during Claudius's reign there were "constant unfruitful seasons."

Lucian

Lucian, a Greek satirist likened to Mark Twain, wrote in the second century about Christ in these words in a work entitled, On the Death of Peregrine.

The Christians, you know, worship a man to this day--the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. . . . You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time, which explains the contempt of death and voluntary self-devotion which are so common among them; and then it was impressed on them by their original lawgiver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted, and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take

quite on faith, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property.

From this same source we also learn that the Christians had "sacred writings," which they read frequently. They also spared no trouble or expense to help each other in matters affecting their community. Unfortunately, the goodness of Christians led them to be easily taken advantage of by unscrupulous people.

Mara Bar-Serapion

The British Museum possesses a manuscript of a letter written between the first and third centuries A.D. The author was Mara Bar-Serapion, a Syrian who was writing to encourage his son in prison to imitate wise men. The letter reads in part:

What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger, the Samians were overwhelmed by the sea; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given.

Pliny the Younger

An author and administrator, Pliny the Younger (62-113 A.D.), the Roman governor of Bithynia, which is in Asia Minor wrote to the Emperor Trajan (98-117 A.D.), asking for guidance in how to deal with accused Christians. At that time it was illegal to be a Christian, and some were tortured or killed. In his letter Pliny describes an early worship service:

They (the Christians) were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to commit any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food--but food of an ordinary and innocent kind. (Epistles, Book 10.96 written in 112 A.D.)

Emperor Trajan

Pliny's inquiry received the Emperor's attention and response, which is published along with Pliny's letters:

The method you have pursued, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those denounced to you as Christians is extremely proper. It is not possible to lay down any general rule which can be applied as the fixed standard in all cases of this nature. No search

should be made for these people; when they are denounced and found guilty they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that when the party denies himself to be a Christian, and shall give proof that he is not (that is, by adoring our Gods) he shall be pardoned on the ground of repentance, even though he may have formerly incurred suspicion. Information without the accuser's name subscribed must not be admitted in evidence against anyone, as it is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and by no means agreeable to the spirit of the age. (Pliny, Epistles, Book 10.97)

Emporer Hadrian

Serenius Granianus, proconsul of Asia, wrote to Emporer Hadrian (117-138 A.D.) about the treatment of Christians who were being tried. Hadrian replied to Minucius Fundanus, his successor with a statement against those who would accuse Christians falsely or without the due process of law. In a letter preserved by Eusebius, a fourth-century church historian, Hadrian says:

I do not wish, therefore, that the matter should be passed by without examination, so that these men may neither be harassed, nor opportunity of malicious proceedings be offered to informers. If, therefore, the provincials can clearly evince their charges against the Christians, so as to answer before the tribunal, let them pursue this course only, but not by mere petitions, and mere outcries against the Christians. For it is far more proper, if any one would bring an accusation, that you should examine it.

Hadrian said that if Christians should be found guilty after they had been examined, then they should be judged "according to the heinousness of the crime." If the the accusers were only slandering the believers, then those who inaccurately made the charges were to be punished. (See Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 4:9.)

Thallus

We now appeal to a lost work by an historian of the first century that was quoted in 221 AD by Julius Africanus. Thallus wrote about the death of Jesus in his history of the Eastern Mediterranean world covering the time from the Trojan War to his own day (52 AD). This work is lost, but other authors cite fragments of it. It is debated about whether Josephus refers to this man as a wealthy Samaritan, who was made a freedman by Emporer Tiberius and who loaned money to Agrippa I. Africanus found a reference dealing with the darkness that covered the land at the time of the crucifixion and writes:

On the whole world there presesed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his History, calls as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun. (Julius Africanus, Extant Writings, 18 in the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6, p. 130.)

Africanus objected to Thallus's assessment because he could not see how an eclipse could take place when there was a full moon, as is the case when the Jews observed the Passover. Africanus does not tell us if Thallus mentions Jesus's name or not.

Josephus

This Jewish historian, writing in about 93 or 94 A.D. in his *Antiquities of the Jews* speaks about the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are two versions of this statement, one in Greek and the other in Arabic. The Greek text dates as early as 315 A.D. but has been disputed. Though Josephus was not a Christian, the language he uses may very well be how a cynical Jew might refer to Jesus.

About this time there arose Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be lawful to call him a man. For he was a doer of wonderful deeds, and a teacher of men who gladly receive the truth. He drew to himself many both of the Jews and of the Gentiles. He was the Christ; and when Pilate, on the indictment of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who loved him at the first did not cease to do so, for he appeared to them again alive on the the third day, the divine prophets having foretold these and ten thousand wonderful things about him. And even to this day the race of Christians, who are named after him, has not died out. (*Antiquities* 18:3.)

Origen says that Josephus did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (*Contra Celsum* 1:47). For this reason many scholars have debated whether Josephus actually penned these words. However Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* (1:11) quotes the passage as genuine.

In 1972 Professor Shlomo Pines of Hebrew University in Jerusalem argued for an Arabic version of this same text which he believes to be older than the Greek one. This version was found in a church history written by Agapius, an Arab bishop in Baghdad. The Arabic version reads:

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and (he) was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and from the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive. Accordingly he was perhaps the Messiah of whom the prophets have recounted wonders.

Professor Pines believes that medieval Christian censorship was probably responsible for the differences between the two versions. Whether one accepts the Greek or the Arabic, the essential story of the death and resurrection of Jesus was known by Josephus and recorded in his *Antiquities of the Jews*.

In another passage in the *Antiquities*, Josephus writes about the martyrdom of the brother of Jesus, called James:

(Ananus) assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.
(20:9)

The Talmud

The Talmud is a collection of Jewish traditions, which were written down by Rabbi Akiba in 135 A.D. A very significant quotation is found in Sanhedrin 43a, dating from the Tannaitic period (70-200 AD).

On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, "He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf." But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!

It is important to note at this point that the word "hanged" is a variant expression meaning that he was crucified. Gal. 3:13 speaks of the curse on "every one who hangs on a tree." The word "hang" is used of crucifixion also in the case of the two thieves (Luke 23:39). Another possible reference to Jesus in the Talmud states that he was either thirty-three or thirty-four when he died (Sanhedrin 106b).

Messianic Prophecies

1. God has made a test for us to know if the message has come from Him: "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words, which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing, which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. (Deut. 18:18-21)

2. Only God knows the future; many who pretend to know do not know at all "Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure' (Isa. 46:8-10).

In all the writings of Buddha, Confucius or Lao-tse, there is not one single predicted prophecy. In the Koran (Islamic writings of Mohammed) there is one instance of a specific prophecy, a self-fulfilling prophecy, that Muhammad would return to Mecca. He did; but this is quite different from the prophecy of Jesus that He would return from the grave. Muhammad could easily go back to Mecca on his own ability, but it takes God for one to come back from the grave.

Historians know how difficult it is to predict the future, because the events of life turn on so many "ifs." Eccl. 7:14 says, "In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider--God has made the one as well as the other So that man may not discover anything that will be after him." Eccl. 9:11 "I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise, nor wealth to the discerning, nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all."

Nor are these prophecies of the Bible vague generalities like some of the ancient prophets of Greece, the Oracle at Delphi or the Sibylline Oracles. For example, Maxentius, Emperor of Rome, is said to have come to one of the Sibylline Oracles and asked what would happen if he attacked the army of Constantine that was approaching Rome on the other side of the Tiber River.

The Oracle's answer was: "In that day, the enemy of Rome will be destroyed." So, confident of victory, he attacked Constantine's army, but it was Maxentius who was destroyed. The oracle failed to define who the enemy of Rome really was; thus in the pattern of most oracular utterances, however it turned out, the prophecy was fulfilled.

The Old Testament alone makes 2,000 predictive prophecies, not a few lucky guesses. Here are 20 of more than 100 prophecies about Jesus Christ:

seed of Woman (Gen. 3:15)
seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:7; 22:18)
seed of Isaac (Gen. 21:12)
seed of Judah (Gen. 49:10)
seed of David (Psa. 132:11)
Time of His coming and death (Daniel 2,9)
born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14)
born in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2)
Elijah, a voice preparing the Way (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1)
anointed by the Holy Spirit (Psa. 45:7; Isa. 11:2)
prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15-18)
teach by parables (Psa. 78:2)
perform miracles (Isa. 35:5,6)
rejected by his brothers (Psa. 69:8)
reject by Jewish rulers (Psa. 118:22)
flesh would not decay (Psa. 16:8-10)
rise from dead on third day (Psa. 16:8-10; 30:3)
ascend to the heavens (Psa. 68:18; 24:7-9)
His law, Word to go forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-3; Micah 4:12)
Gentiles would be admitted (Isa. 11:10; 42:1; Psa. 2:8)

These are but a few things, which Jesus could not have self-determined but must have relied upon others. Peter Stoner, mathematician, in *Science Speaks*, selected just 8 of these Messianic Prophecies concerning Christ and estimated the odds of these being accidentally fulfilled. Results 1 in 10 (to the 17th power); that is 1 in 10 with 17 zeros following it.

Suppose we take 10 to the 17th power in silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover the entire state 2 feet deep. Now mark one of these 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?

The apostles throughout the New Testament appealed to two things, which established that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Messiah. The first was the resurrection, but the second is fulfilled Messianic prophecy. Jesus said, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44,45). The Old Testament contains more than 300 prophecies of the Messiah which were fulfilled in Jesus.

The truth of Jesus and the inspiration of the Scriptures may be established through fulfilled prophecy. If God is God, then His word will be true and His knowledge infinite. Indeed, His word will never be broken (John 10:35). If God has spoken, He will make it good (Num. 23:19). God is able to subject all things to His will (Isa. 46:9,10). The prophesied Messiah could be absolutely identified by His fulfillment of the prophecies made about Him (Rom. 1:2-4).

Notice these appeals to Messianic prophecy:

And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. (Luke 24:27)

"These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44)

"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. (John 5:39,40) "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me." But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:46,47)

And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:20,21)

"For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS'; for that which refers to Me has *its* fulfillment." (Luke 22:37)

"But *they have done this* in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'" (John 15:25)

Old Testament Prophecies About the Messiah

PROPHECY

FULFILLMENT

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. He was to be born of the seed of the woman
Gen. 3:15 | Matt. 1:18 |
| 2. He would be the Son of God
Psalm 2:7; 1 Chron. 17:11-14; 2 Sam. 7:12-16 | Luke 1:32-35 |
| 3. He would overcome the serpent
Gen. 3:15 | Heb. 2:14 |
| 4. He would be of the seed of Abraham
Gen. 12:1-3; 17:7; 22:18 | Gal. 3:16 |
| 5. He would be of the seed of Isaac
Gen. 21:12 | Heb. 11:18 |
| 6. He would be of the seed of Jacob
Num. 24:17; Gen. 35:10-12 | Luke 3:23,34 |
| 7. He would be of the seed of Judah
Gen. 49:10 | Heb. 7:14 |
| 8. He would be of the seed of Jesse
Isa. 11:1 | Luke 3:23,32 |
| 9. He would be of the seed of David
Psalm 132:11; Jer. 23:5 | Acts 13:23; Rom. 1:3 |
| 10. The time of His coming and death
Dan. 9:24-27 | Luke 2:1 |
| 11. Born of a virgin
Isa. 7:14 | Matt. 1:18; Luke 2:7 |
| 12. He was to be called Immanuel
Isa. 7:14 | Matt. 1:22-23 |
| 13. Born in Bethlehem
Micah 5:2 | Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4-6 |

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|---|---|
| 14. Great Men shall come and bow down to him
Psalm 72:10-15 | Matt. 2:1-11 |
| 15. Children slaughtered: that He might be killed
Jer. 31:15 | Matt. 2:16-18 |
| 16. Introduced by John the Baptist
Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6 | Matt. 3:1-3; Luke 1:17 |
| 17. Was anointed by the Holy Spirit
Psalm 45:7; Isa. 11:2; 61:1 | Matt. 3:16,17; John 3:34; Acts
10:38 |
| 18. Was a prophet like Moses
Deut. 18:15-18 | Acts 3:20-22 |
| 19. He was sent as a deliverer to the people
Isa. 61:1-3 | Luke 4:16-21, 43 |
| 20. He is the light to Zebulun and Naphtali
Isa. 9:1-3 | Matt. 4:12-16 |
| 21. He comes to the temple and cleanses it
Haggai 2:7-9; Malachi 3:1; Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11 | Luke 19:45,46; John 2:13-16 |
| 22. His poverty
Isa. 53:2 | Mark 6:3; Luke 9:58 |
| 23. He was meek and not loud
Isa. 42:1,2 | Phil. 2:5-8 |
| 24. His compassion
Isa. 40:11; 42:3 | Matt. 12:15-20; Heb. 4:15 |
| 25. He was without guile
Isa. 53:9 | 1 Pet. 2:22 |
| 26. He had great Zeal for God's house
Psalm 69:9 | John 2:17 |
| 27. He taught by parables
Psalm 78:2 | Matt. 13:34,35 |
| 28. He performed miracles
Isa. 35:5,6 | Luke 7:18-23; Matt. 9:35 |
| 29. His brothers rejected him
Psalm 69:8 | John 2:17; Mark 3:21,31 |
| 30. The Jews hated him
Psalm 69:4; Isa. 53:3 | John 1:11; 7:5 |
| 31. The Jewish rulers rejected him
Psalm 118: 22 | John 7:48; Matt. 21:42 |
| 32. He was a stumbling stone and a rock of offense
Isa. 8:14 | 1 Pet. 2:8; Rom. 9:32 |
| 33. His flesh did not decay
Psalm 16:8-10; | Acts 2:31 |
| 34. He rose from the dead on the third day
Psalm 16:8-10; 30:3; 41:10; 118:17 | Luke 24:6, 31, 34 |
| 35. He ascended into the heavens
Psalm 68:18; 24:7-9 | Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9 |
| 36. He became a priest like Melchizedek, who was both king and priest
Psalm 110:4; Zech. 6:12,13 | Heb. 5:5-6 |
| 37. His Law went forth from Zion and his word from Jerusalem in the last days
Isa. 2:1-3; Micah 4:12 | Luke 24:46; Acts 2:1-40 |
| 38. He would enlist Gentiles into his service | |

Isa. 11:10; 42:1; Psalm 2:8	John 10:16; Acts 10:44-48; Rom. 15:9-12
39. The righteousness of his reign Isa. 9:6,7; Num. 24:17-19; Micah 5:2	Rom. 3:23-26; 1 John 2:2
40. His Pre-Existence Micah 5:2; Isa. 9:6,7; 44:6	Col. 1:17; John 1:1,2; 8:58; Rev. 1:17
41. He shall be called Lord Psalm 110:1	Luke 2:11; 20:41-44
42. He shall be seated at the right hand of God Psalm 110:1	Heb. 1:3; Acts 2:34,35

Prophecies of the Sufferings of the Messiah

1. Betrayed by a friend Psalm 41:9; 55:12-14	John 13:18-21
2. Forsaken by his disciples Zech. 13:7	Matt. 26:31-56; Mark 14:50
3. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver Zech. 11:12	Matt. 26:15
4. This money was thrown into the temple Zech. 11:13	Matt. 27:5
5. This money was given to buy the potter's field Zech. 11:13	Matt. 27:7
6. He was patient and silent in his sufferings Isa. 53:7	Matt. 26:63; 27:12-14
7. He was smitten on the cheek Micah 5:1	Matt. 27:30
8. His sufferings were intense Psalm 22:14,15	Luke 22:42-44
9. He was scourged and spat upon Psalm 35:15; Isa. 50:6	Mark 14:65; John 19:1
10. His face was greatly marred Isa. 52:14; 53:3	John 19:1-5
11. He suffered that he might bear our sins Isa. 53:4-6, 12; Dan. 9:26	Matt. 20:28; 26:28
12. The rulers, Jews and Gentiles, combine against him to put him to death Psalm 2:1-4	Luke 23:12; Acts 4:27,28
13. He was extended on the cross, and his hands and feet were nailed to the wood Isa. 25:10,11; Psalm 22:16; Zech. 12:10	John 19:18; 20:25; Luke 23:33
14. He was numbered among the thieves Isa. 53:12	Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27, 28
15. They gave him gall and vinegar Psalm 69:21	Matt. 27:39-44
16. He was mocked Psalm 22:7,8; 35:15-21	Matt. 27:39-44
17. He was separated from the Father Isa. 63:1-3; Psalm 22:1	Matt. 27:46

18. They divided his garments and cast lots for them Psalm 22:18	Matt. 27:35
19. He became a curse for us and bore our reproach Psalm 22:6; Isa. 49:7	Rom. 15:3; Heb. 13:13; Gal. 3:13
20. He made intercession for his persecutors and for the thieves Isa. 53:12	Luke 23:34
21. He was pierced after His death Zech. 12:10	John 19:34-37
22. They did not break a bone of his body Ex. 12:46; Psalm 34:20	John 19:33-36
23. He was buried with the rich Isa. 53:9	Matt. 27:57-60
24. People shook their heads Psalm 109:25; 22:7	Matt. 27:39
25. Darkness came over the face of the land Amos 8:9	Matt. 27:45

Many prophecies Jesus fulfilled were totally beyond the power of human control, such as: (1) place of birth, (2) time of birth, (3) manner of birth of a virgin woman, (4) betrayal, (5) manner of death in crucifixion, (6) people's reactions at his death, (7) piercing, and (8) his burial.

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 10¹⁷ of having them come true in any man, but they all came true in Christ.

Chances of Fulfillment

"There is only **1 chance in 480 Billion x 1 Billion x 1 Trillion** that 17 Old Testament predictions would be fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ." (*The Signature of God, Grant R. Jeffrey, Frontier Research Publications, Toronto, Ontario, pg. 181. This probability is based on particular prophecies referenced in the book, pages 172-181. Some of those listed prophecies are referenced below.*)

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH 53

PROPHECY	ISAIAH 53	NEW TESTAMENT FULFILLMENT
Despised	3	Matt. 27:39-43
Rejected	3	John 1:10,11; 7:5, 48
Acquainted with Grief	3	Heb. 4:15
Bearer of Grief and Sorrows	4	Matt. 8:16,17
Without Deceit	9	1 Pet. 2:22
Dumb Before His Persecutors	7	Matt. 26:63; 27:12,14
A Bearer of our stripes	5	1 Pet. 2:24,25
A sin-bearer	5, 12	1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 9:28;
Numbered with transgressors	12	Luke 22:37
Intercessor for transgressors	12	Luke 23:34
Deprived of Justice	8	Matt. 27:24
Buried with the Rich	9	Matt. 27:57-60
Raised from the Dead	10	Mark 16:9

Exalted and Honored

12

Phil. 2:9-11

Pierced Through

5

John 19:34; 20:25

“Truly eight centuries ahead Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus and ‘spoke of him’ (John 12:41). In his 53rd chapter vividness of detail causes readers to think they are looking at history not prophecy. Unbelievers have searched heaven and earth, the living and the dead, to find anybody but Jesus (cf. Moses, Uzziah, Zerubbabel, Jeremiah, Zedekiah, Isaiah, Jehoiachin, Israel) to fit the chapter’s statements; but nobody except Jesus fits. Further, it would be impossible for anybody else purposely to arrange his life so as to make Isaiah 53 tell of him.” (Hugo McCord, *Messianic Prophecies*, 44.)

“How could the same Messiah be a Mighty God and an Eternal King, yet also be despised and rejected by men and be cruelly put to death? The Jewish scribes wrestled with this paradox for centuries without finding the answer, but now that it has all been fulfilled, we can see how beautifully it all came to pass in the life of Jesus.

“When prophecy contains numerous detail, all of which is exactly fulfilled, that is infallible proof that the prophecy is from God” (Herbert C. Casteel, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, 170).

The Miracles of Jesus

What Is A Miracle?

“Miracles are unusual events caused by God. The laws of nature are generalizations about ordinary events caused by Him.” (J.N. Hawthorne, *Questions of Science and Faith*, p. 1960)

“A miracle is an event in the external world worked by the direct power of God intended as a sign.” (Lynn Gardner, *Christianity Stands True*, p. 65)

“A miracle by definition is an event that is unique and without precedent. It is impossible to account for it as we do other events. The proper way of determining if something happened is not whether we can explain it. The first question to be asked is not can it happen, but rather did it happen? If an even can be determined as having happened, yet it defies explanation, we still have to admit to the fact that it happened, explanation or not.” (Josh McDowell, *Answers*, pp. 80,81)

Three words used in the New Testament (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:4):

35. *dunamij* miracle, a deed of power, implying a supernatural source

36. *teraj* a wonder, when used with “sign” meaning an awe-inspiring, miraculous event

37. *shmeion* a sign, an authenticating mark or token of supernatural power

What is the Objection to the Possibility of Miracles?

Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) developed the following argument:

38. Miracles are violations of natural laws.

39. Natural laws are immutable.

40. It is impossible for immutable laws to be violated.

41. Therefore, miracles are not possible.

Spinoza, in making this argument, built into his premises his own view that nothing exists beyond the universe. Since that time scientists have learned that natural laws don't tell us what must happen but only describe what usually does happen. Spinoza by his argument reveals his anti-supernatural bias. He assumes that there is nothing beyond nature that could act in nature.

Can We Trust the New Testament Witnesses?

Bernard Ramm lists reasons why we may know that the miracles have adequate and reliable testimony:

42. *Many miracles were done in public.*

43. John 11:47ff. "if we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him."

44. Acts 4:16 a notable miracle has taken place...and we cannot deny it.

45. Acts 26:26 these things have not been done in a corner

46. *Some miracles were performed in the presence of unbelievers.*

47. John 3:2 no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

48. Matt. 12:10-14 before Pharisees who sought to kill him

49. Matt. 12:24 casting out demons "by the power of Beelzebul"

50. Acts 2:1-6 tongue-speaking on the days of Pentecost

51. *The miracles of Jesus were performed over a period of time and involved a great variety of powers.*

52. *There is the testimony of the cured.*

53. could not possibly have been psychosomatic

54. John 9:30-32 blind man's testimony

55. John 12:3-6 the gracious gift of Mary

56. *Miracles cannot be discounted because of the extravagant claim of pagan miracles.*

"Miracles are believed in non-Christian religions because the religion is already believed, but in the biblical religion, miracles are part of the means of establishing the true religion. This distinction is of immense importance. Israel was brought into existence by a series of miracles, the Law was given surrounded by supernatural wonders, and many of the prophets were identified as God's spokesmen by the power to perform miracles. Jesus came not only preaching but performing miracles, and the apostles from time to time worked wonders. It was the miracle authenticating the religion at every point." (Ramm)

"All the essentials of Hinduism would, I think, remain unimpaired if you subtracted the miraculous, and the same is almost true of Mohammedanism, but you cannot do that with Christianity. It is precisely the story of the a great Miracle. A naturalistic Christianity leaves out all that is specifically Christian." (C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 83.)

57. *Law courts still depend upon eyewitness testimony in order to function.*

Wolfhart Pannenberg of the University of Munich said, "The question . . . whether something happened or not at a given time some thousand years ago can be settled only by historical argument."

58. *Those who believe miracles cannot happen would have to be omniscient to know that for certain.*

“The experience against miracles is uniform only if we know all the reports about miracles are false, and this we do not know. No one has an infallible knowledge of ‘natural laws,’ so that he can exclude from the outset the very possibility of unique events. Science can tell us what has happened, but it cannot tell us what may or may not happen. It observes events; it does not create them. The historian does not dictate what history can contain; he is open to whatever the witnesses report.” (Clark Pinnock, “The Tombstone That Trembled,” *Christianity Today* 12 [April 12, 1968], p. 8)

59. *Christianity’s claims are unique.*

“Besides this, no religion offers the kind of miracles that Christianity can claim. No other religion has the record of specific prophecy or divine deliverance that the Bible gives. And no other religion has any miracle that can be compared to the resurrection of Jesus Christ in its grandeur or its testimony.” (Norman Geiseler and Ron Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask*, p. 98)

If God Performed Miracles Then, Why Does He Not Perform Them Now?

60. Luke 16:29,31 people who will not believe the Bible would not believe even if someone should arise from the dead to speak to them.

61. Miracles are not necessary today because reliable records are available of those miracles which have already occurred.

62. Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4. The apostles “confirmed” the testimony of God’s word by the miracles in the first century.

Assessing the Quality of Miracles Jesus Performed:

63. *Jesus healed everyone who came to him without fail.*

Matt. 4:23,24; 8:16; 9:35; 14:34-36; 15:29-31; Acts 5:16

64. *Jesus healed everyone completely; no one came back in a few days still suffering. Crippled persons who had lost arms, legs and eyes were made whole, so that the crowd could see immediate physical changes.*

Matt. 15:29-31; Mark 7:31-37; John 7:23; Acts 3:7-11 “Maimed” persons are crippled by having arms or legs missing (Matt. 18:8,9)

65. *The enemies of Jesus admitted that he could work miracles, but many today are considered frauds.*

John 11:46-48; Acts 4:16

66. *Jesus and His apostles did not use their miraculous powers to become wealthy as did Simon the Sorcerer and as some do today.*

Matt. 10:8-10; Acts 3:16

The apostles earned their living from their work but did not live lavishly (1 Corinthians 9).

67. *Jesus did not require a person to be present at a healing service to be healed. He could heal from a distance.*

Matt. 8:5-13

68. *Jesus did not require faith of everyone whom he healed before he was willing to heal them. Some who were healed did not believe and some could not believe, for they were dead.*

Luke 7:11,12; 8:54,55

Jesus worked miracles in order to cause people to believe (John 11:42; 20:30,31; Acts 3:11,12). Jesus never excused his failure to heal someone by claiming there were unbelievers present. Jesus did not have to make excuses; He healed everyone.

69. *Jesus did not require great stirrings of emotions or a special atmosphere to heal anyone. Modern faith healers must have such an atmosphere to put over their fraudulent ways.*
70. *The apostles did not exalt themselves or use their powers to build their own "church" or denomination. Rather they pointed to Christ and to the one true church He died for. The apostles taught against division.*
Acts 4:10-12; 1 Cor. 1:10-13.

The Holy Spirit's work was to guide the apostles into all the truth (John 16:12,13). The Holy Spirit does not lie; nor does the Spirit say one thing to one person and a contradictory thing to another person. He does not cause confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). From the Spirit comes but one gospel and one faith (Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 4:4-6).

The Validity of Jesus as a Prophet

71. Biblical Tests of a Prophet:

72. Deut. 13:1-5 speaks of the one true Lord God

73. Deut. 18:21,22 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

- fulfillment to the letter 1 Kings 13:3; 2 Kings 23:15,16

74. Some Examples of False Prophets

75. Jer. 23:16-40 prophesying from their own imagination (cf. Ezekiel 13)

76. Matt. 24:11,24 false Christs leading away the elect

77. Jer. 5:31; 6:14; 38: 6 false prophets choose a course of comfort

Four Tests of True Prophecy

78. A prophecy must be an unveiling of the future that no mere human foresight could guess.

79. A prophecy must be spoken so long before the event takes place that the lapse of time will preclude the agency of the prophet himself in bringing to pass the fulfillment thereof.

80. Prophecy must contain a sufficient number of details to exclude accident or guesswork.

81. A prophecy is fully accredited only by its historical fulfillment.

Some Prophecies Jesus Made

82. Prophecies of Healing: What would have happened if Jesus' prophecy had failed?

83. John 4:46-53 the royal official's son

84. Matt. 8:5-13 the centurion's servant

85. Luke 8:41-56 Jairus' daughter

86. Paying the Temple Taxes Matt. 17:24-27. What would have happened if Jesus' prophecy had failed?
87. The Destruction of Jerusalem
88. Matt. 24:1-34
89. Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Books 4,5,6 provides the historical proofs of the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy
90. See J. Marcellus Kik, *Matthew 24: An Exposition*, for a valuable study of this chapter. This study may also be found in Kik's work, *An Eschatology of Victory*.
91. His Death, Burial and Resurrection
92. Matt. 16:21
93. Matt. 12:39,40
94. Matt 17:9,12, 22,23;
95. Matt. 20:18,19
96. Matt. 27:62-66
97. His Second Coming
98. John 14:1-3; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Peter 3:1-14
99. Matthew 25:1-13; 14-30; 31-46
100. Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50

Evidences of the Resurrection

The Scripture itself was written by men who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. No other source of evidence can be considered as authoritative.

1. Jesus predicted his resurrection and the day he would rise.

John 2:19-21 "Destroy this temple (body), and in three days I will raise it up."

Matt 16:21 "From that time on Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

See also Matt 17:9,22,23; 20:18,19; 26:32; 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:10,31; 10:32-34; 14:28,58; Luke 9:22-27; John 10:17-18.

2. The suffering of Jesus shows that he actually died.

Mark 15:15-20 Jesus was beaten and scourged by the Roman soldiers. Such scourging was often enough to kill a man.

Mark 15:21,22 So weak was Jesus that Simon a Cyrenian was compelled to bear his cross. "They brought Him to the place Golgotha" (he needed assistance to get there) **Lk. 23:26**

John 19:31-37 Jesus was found to be dead already when the soldiers came to break his legs and hasten death. One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, "and immediately blood and water came out."

Mark 15:42-45 Pilate marveled that Jesus was dead and would not release the body until he found out for sure from the centurion

John 19:38-42 If Jesus were not dead the burial procedures of wrapping the body in linen cloths and the mixture of myrrh and aloes would have suffocated him.

3. **Jesus appeared** to women and men, to people alone, to two disciples, to the ten disciples in the upper room, then to the twelve, to the seven by the lake, and to more than 500 at one time. The appearances occurred in many different places and under different circumstances. Not one person who witnessed the appearances ever denied what he saw, heard and touched. What Jesus did was not done in a corner (**Acts 26:26**).

4. **Jesus was touched.** The resurrection body was a real body: Luke 24:39-43: John 20:27,28; 21:9-13. See also John 20:16,17 (NASV; NKJV): "Stop clinging to me." Luke 24:42,43: "And he took it and ate it in their presence."

5. **The guard at the tomb and the seal of the governor. Matt. 27:62-66.** "Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.' So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone, and setting the guard." To break the seal was a criminal offense. The fact that Jesus' enemies asked for a guard showed that they took his prediction seriously.

After the raising of Lazarus, they were afraid that all men would believe in Jesus (**John 11:45-53**). **Matt. 28:11-15** The guards witnessed the resurrection but were bribed to lie that the disciples stole the body. They claimed they were asleep. But the penalty for sleeping while on duty was very severe. This is why the promise to appease the governor and make them secure.

6. **The heavy stone covering the grave was moved.** Matt. 27:60; Mark 16:3,4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1. The wording of Matthew and John seem to indicate that there was a slope up which the stone was rolled. **Matt. 28:2-4** "an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door." "The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men."

How could a weakened Jesus (if he had not died) have been able to move the heavy stone, if he had not died? How did the disciples and Jesus evade the guards at the tomb, if the disciples stole the body?

7. **The grave clothes were left orderly.** John 20:3-9. When Peter and John entered the tomb they found the grave clothes left orderly. If Jesus were dead, the grave clothes would have been left on him. If the body were stolen, they would not have taken the time to leave the grave clothes. How did Jesus get out of the grave clothes in his weakened condition? Lazarus was unable to remove his grave clothes (John 11:43,44).

8. **No evidence of a dead body was ever found by the enemies of Christ.** If the body of Christ could have been produced, the enemies of Christ would have done so and exposed the disciples as false witnesses. We may be sure that no stone was left unturned in the many efforts to disprove the resurrection and stop Christianity.

9. **The remarkable change in the disciples.**

BEFORE (weak, cowardly and unbelieving)	AFTER (convinced, determined, bold)
Matt. 28:16,17 "when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted."	Acts 2:31-32 the boldness of Peter and the eleven at Pentecost preaching about Jesus'

<p>Mark 16:9-14 they did not believe the women or the two; "He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart"</p> <p>Luke 24:10-11 the women's words seemed to them like "idle tales, and they did not believe them."</p> <p>Luke 24:19-27 the despair of the two on the road to Emmaus; the doubt of Peter and John because they did not see him</p> <p>John 20:19 "the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews"</p> <p>John 20:24-29 Thomas said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."</p>	<p>death, burial and resurrection, "to which we are all witnesses"</p> <p>Acts 3:13-22 Peter and John refused to listen to the council (Sanhedrin) which condemned Jesus</p> <p>Acts 5:17-21 apostles imprisoned but delivered by an angel went out to preach again</p> <p>Acts 5:26-32 the apostles brought again before the council; Peter responds, "We ought to obey God rather than men."</p> <p>Acts 7:59,60 Stephen stoned for preaching Jesus as the Christ</p> <p>Acts 12:1-4 James killed with the sword, Peter imprisoned for preaching Jesus Christ</p> <p>According to the traditions of history, they were all martyred for their faith except John. Would you die preaching something you knew was a lie? It is certainly not in the character or teachings of Jesus that one should lie. None of the disciples ever denied the resurrection, but they died preaching it.</p>
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10. **The existence of the church.** The church did not just happen, it was caused by the power of God. Jesus predicted that the gates of hades would not prevent his building his church (Matt. 16:18). The early church turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). The only adequate cause for this event is the resurrection.

11. **The faith and the preaching of the apostle Paul.** Paul (Saul of Tarsus) was originally a persecutor of the church and a scholarly man of the Jews (Acts 7:58-8:4). As a witness to the resurrection his testimony is especially important in view of his previous zeal against Christianity (1 Tim. 1:12-14). His testimony of the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15:3-9 is the earliest documentary evidence we have. Paul's conversion and subsequent life cannot be satisfactorily explained except in the way he himself explained it--he had seen the risen Christ.

Theories of the Resurrection Answered

I. THE SWOON THEORY

Theory: Christ did not really die but fainted from exhaustion. When he was laid in the tomb he revived and later showed himself to the disciples.

Answer:

1. Jesus was in a weakened condition and did actually die. The Roman soldiers were experts in killing and knew when a man was dead. Pilate had a centurion to reassure him of the death.

2. Jesus' body had gone through preparations for burial
3. How did Jesus remove the burial wrappings if he were alive and in a weakened condition?
4. How could Jesus have moved the huge stone in his weakened condition? How did he move it unnoticed by the guards?
5. After the 40 days of appearances, how did Jesus disguise himself for the rest of his life? His disciples went into all the world.
6. If Jesus were a hoax, why didn't the disciples disavow him? Why did they die for their faith in the resurrection?

II. THE VISION/HALLUCINATION THEORY

Theory: Christ appeared to His disciples but only in (a) spiritual visions or (b) hallucinations. Since the disciples were expecting to see Jesus, it would seem only natural for them to think that they did. The vision took the form of a bodily appearance.

Answer:

1. A vision is a miracle. This theory merely substitutes one miracle for another.
2. Why did the disciples think they saw a body if it were only a vision? Jesus in his appearances could speak, hear, eat, touch and be touched. See 1 John 1:1-4. Jesus proved himself alive by "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3).
3. How did the same vision occur to more than 500 people at one time?
4. The vision theory does not explain what happened at the tomb. What happened to the body of Jesus? What frightened the guards? Who rolled away the stone? Why were the linen wrappings left behind?
5. The disciples did not expect to see Jesus. In spite of his prophecies, the disciples were skeptical and unbelieving.
6. Why did the visions only last 40 days?
7. Why did the disciples agree to announce a lie? Why would they continue to lie until they were all killed?

III. LEGEND THEORY

Theory: Legends developed in Palestine some years after Christ's career that he rose from the dead. The resurrection was one of the legends.

Answer:

1. The Bible claims that the resurrection story was based on eye-witness accounts.
 - *Matthew and John were apostles and eyewitnesses
 - ***2 Pet. 1:16** no cleverly-devised tales
 - ***1 John 1:3** "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you"
 - ***John 19:35; 20:30,31** John writes from first-hand experience
 - ***Luke 1:1-3** Luke interviewed eyewitnesses
 - ***Acts 26:24-26** "this thing was not done in a corner"
2. It is impossible to suppose that the early church did not know its own history; the very fact of the early church of the Bible account is evidence of its truth.

3. Wouldn't the Jews have shown the accounts to be false? See John 11:43-48; Acts 4:16,17.
4. What would cause the scholarly and zealous Saul of Tarsus to forsake Judaism and embrace a legend?
5. The evidence demonstrates that all the New Testament was written within 70 years of the time of Jesus. Most of it was written within 40 years. This is not enough time for stories to develop into legends. Legends usually take centuries to develop.

IV. THEORY THAT THE BODY WAS STOLEN BY THE DISCIPLES

Theory: The high priests and Roman soldiers were correct in their response to the Christian claim. The body was stolen.

Answer:

101. This is certainly out of character of the timid, fearful, unbelieving, and scattered disciples to risk their lives against the Roman soldiers at the tomb to steal his body. They were hiding because they feared jail for themselves (John 20:19).
102. A small band of Jews would not have frightened the Roman soldiers, who were under punishment of death if they failed in their duty.
103. It is impossible to believe that all the guard fell asleep at the same time.
104. The Jews were permitted to make the tomb as secure as they knew how (Matt. 27:65). There were probably several soldiers at the tomb.
105. What could a few, poor fishermen do against disciplined and well-armed soldiers? Why was no one reported wounded or killed?
106. Why did they leave the grave clothes? If the disciples stole the body, how could they have enough time to roll the stone away, take off the grave clothes, and leave undetected? Why would they undress the body? Why did they leave the clothes orderly? What did they do with the body?
107. The soldiers were either awake or asleep. If they were asleep, how did the soldier know the disciples stole the body? If they were awake, why should they allow the body to be taken?
108. Why didn't the Sanhedrin apprehend the apostles on Pentecost and imprison them until they confessed what really happened? If the disciples had stolen the body, they would likely have remained hidden themselves and would never have openly confessed to being followers of Christ. The people knew that Jesus had arisen from the dead (Acts 2:22,32; Matt. 27:63).
109. What possible motive would the disciples have for stealing the body?
110. It is not the character of a follower of Jesus to be deceptive.

<h3>The Moral Character of Jesus</h3>
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His moral character coincided with His claims. Many asylum inmates claim to be celebrities or deities; but their claims disagree with their characters. Christ, however was genuine. He is unique--as unique as God.

Jesus Christ was sinless. The caliber of His life was such that He was able to challenge His enemies with the question, "Can any of you prove Me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46). He was met by silence, even though He addressed those who would have liked to point out a flaw in His character. We read of the temptations of Jesus, but we never hear of a confession of sin on His part (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; Heb. 4:14-16). He never asked for forgiveness, though He told His followers to do so. This lack of any sense of moral failure on Jesus' part is astonishing in view of the fact that it is completely contrary to the experience of the saints and mystics in all ages.

The closer men and women draw to God, the more overwhelmed they are with their own failure, corruption, and shortcomings. The closer one is to a shining light, the more he realizes his need of a bath. This is true also, in the moral realm, for ordinary mortals.

It is also striking that John, Paul, and Peter, all of whom were trained from earliest childhood to believe in the universality of sin, all spoke of the sinless Christ: "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). Paul said, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Pilate, no friend of Jesus, said, "What evil has He done?" He implicitly recognized Christ's innocence. Three times Pilate pronounced Jesus innocent:

Luke 23:4 And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, "I find no guilt in this man."

Luke 23:14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.

Luke 23:22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; I will therefore punish Him and release Him."

Matt. 27:24 And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves."

And the Roman centurion who witnessed the death of Christ said, "Surely He was the Son of God" (Matthew. 27:54). Luke records the centurion agreeing with Pilate saying, "Certainly this man was innocent" (Luke 23:47).

The Ethics of Jesus Christ

Love

Matt. 7:12
John 13:34-35
John 15:13

Matt. 15:31-46
Matt. 22: 37-39

Going the Extra Mile

Matt. 5:38-48

Forgiveness

Matt. 6:14-15
Matt. 18:15-35
Luke 23:43
John 8:1-11

The Ethic of the Heart

Matt. 5:21-22
Matt. 5:27-30
Matt. 6:20-24
Matt. 12:34-37
Matt. 15:16-20
Matt. 18:35

The Value of the Human Soul

Matt. 16:26
Luke 15:4-32

Substance over Appearance

Matt. 6:1-18
1 John 2:15-17

Personal Responsibility

Matt. 25:14-30
Rom. 2:1-16
Rom. 14:12
2 Cor. 5:10

The Evil of Greed

Matt. 6:19-24

The Need for Obedience

Phil. 2:5-8

Heb. 5:8-9

Matt. 7:24-27

Luke 6:46

Some Major Passages

Matt. 4:1-11

1 John 2:15-17

1 Cor. 10:12-13

Gal. 5:16-24

Rom. 1:18-32

2 Peter 1:3-11

2 Tim. 3:1-9