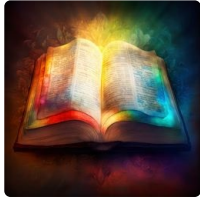


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Supernatural Evidence



Authority of Scriptures - Steve Gregg

In "Supernatural Evidence," Steve Gregg argues that while subjective experiences can be helpful in understanding the Bible, objective evidence is required to establish its credibility as the word of God. Supernatural evidence, such as the fulfillment of prophecies, transcends subjective experience and confirms the inspiration of the Bible from God's direct divine intervention. Gregg discusses the challenge of proving the veracity of a religion through supernatural events, but emphasizes that the accuracy and consistency of biblical prophecies provide strong evidence of divine inspiration.

Transcript

Well, several long sessions ago, and it does seem like a long time ago since we started. To me, I don't know about you, but this is only our third day, the beginning of the third day. But it seems like a lot longer time than that, doesn't it? Many sessions ago, I mentioned that when we come to examine the question of the inspiration of Scripture, of course, first thing we look at is the fact that the Scripture makes the unusual claim that it is inspired by God.

But then when we want to examine that claim to see whether it's credible or not, there's a number of approaches we can take to testing it, to observing evidences. And among the evidences that we considered briefly or at length, there was the subjective evidence. You might recall I spoke for a few minutes about that in an earlier lecture.

That which you feel inside occasionally when you read the Bible, when God by His Spirit really speaks to you in an unusual and dynamic way by something you've read in the Scripture, those subjective experiences often go a long way, at least for the moment, to confirm to us that the Bible is more than an ordinary book and that it really is the Word of God. But as I said, that kind of subjective evidence has, there are limits to its value. It is good, but it's limited in its value.

And the limits are due to the fact that that evidence is not always present, and not every time you read the same passage will you feel the same thing. And there will be days, no doubt, or maybe seasons of your Christian life where you're not getting the same

blessing from reading the Bible as you got on some other occasions. And therefore, if your confidence in the Scripture rests on these subjective experiences alone, then of course you will have reason to believe the Bible when you feel good about it, and not to believe it when you don't feel good about it, unless there's some other objective reason for believing in the inspiration of Scripture.

And so we move to the subject of objective evidences, and we've spent several sessions in that exploration. Objective evidences, of course, are those that are not confined to what I'm feeling at a given moment or what I'm experiencing inwardly, but they are out there. They're separate from, they're transcendent to, they exist quite apart from my experience, quite apart from my even recognizing them to be there.

The world is full of people who know nothing about the objective evidences for the inspiration of Scripture, but that doesn't change the fact that those objective evidences are there. And if no human being ever lived who ever noticed them, they'd still be there. That's what objective means.

It's not based on whether we believe it, feel it, experience it, know it or not. It's there, it's an objective reality, and of course, it's to our advantage to come to grips with it and to be aware of it. Now, among those objective evidences that seem to help us believe that the Scripture has a credible claim to being inspired is the law of gravity, which we just heard in action a moment ago.

No, that is, there's a number of things that are objective that you can look at, which would seem to be the kind of evidences you'd expect to find if the Bible were inspired, but they are what I call natural evidences. And the reason I say they're natural is because one could take full stock of these evidences without coming to the conclusion that anything supernatural had happened. Okay.

When we say that the Bible is, it agrees with what is known from historical and archaeological research, that's good. That's in favor of the Scripture, but it doesn't prove that anything supernatural is afoot. When we say that the Bible somehow manages to avoid the charge of being in conflict with science, that the Bible is in fact invulnerable to the attacks of science, that the Bible is in fact agreeable with science, even to a remarkable degree, anticipates things that scientists only hundreds of years later discovered.

That too is in favor of the Scripture. That too is an evidence that tells us the Scripture, at least in that respect, is the kind of book that it would have to be if it were inspired. But again, one could believe that the Bible is free from scientific error without concluding that it's inspired by God.

We talked about its survival through time. We talked about its unique characteristics. And we saw that all of the things that we examined are the kinds of things you'd expect

to find so if the Bible were inspired, but none of them in themselves or even collectively prove beyond the shadow of doubt that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Because these things do avail themselves of a natural explanation. It is possible for an uninspired writer who does his research well to write some kind of a book that avoids making historical inaccuracies, that avoids going across the grain of what is scientific truth, that somehow through some circumstance manages to survive through the ages after how many secular books have survived for hundreds and thousands of years, although not anywhere near as well as the Bible has, and to exhibit some of the characteristics we talked about. So everything we've said so far is favorable toward the conclusion that the Bible is inspired by God, but really nothing so far that we've discussed has proven or could even be pretended to have proven that the Bible is inspired by God.

What we can say is if the evidence had turned out otherwise in the areas we've considered, it could have been proven that the Bible was not the Word of God. If the Bible was in fact inaccurate in some of these areas, that's all it would take to prove that it wasn't from God, because God wouldn't make no inaccurate statements. And therefore, it is consistent with our search to consider these evidences, because especially if critics say that the Bible is disqualified on these bases, it's good for us to know that they are wrong in saying so, that the Bible is not disqualified and that the Bible shines well when all these evidences are brought into the consideration.

But as I've been saying in a number of ways the past five minutes or so, we still don't have proof that it's the Word of God from anything that we've considered. Now, an objective researcher looking at the evidences we've seen would say, well, it's quite remarkable. The things we've seen are quite remarkable.

And they incline me to the view that the authors of the scripture were honest men, and that when they said they were writing from God, that they really believed it. They weren't trying to deceive anyone. They really believed they were hearing from God.

But some people have thought they were hearing from God and were not. Even if we give the authors credit for being honest and intelligent, that still doesn't prove that when they said the Lord's Word came to me, that it really was the Lord's Word that came to them. But I can tell you, I've known many honest Christian charismatics who say God told me, but they were wrong.

God didn't tell them. When I was single, there were three different women who came to me and said God told them that we're supposed to get married. If they were all right, and they were all charismatic believers, then God must believe in polygamy because I was supposed to marry all three of them.

I didn't marry any of them, by the way, because God didn't tell me that. But they really

thought that was God talking to them. And so you got to be careful about saying, well, the guy's honest.

The guy is well-intentioned. He thinks God told him, and he's fully convinced of it. Maybe so, but that doesn't mean it's true.

In order to be convinced that God has spoken and that the Bible is a book whose origins are owed not to simply clever writers, but to the direct supernatural intervention of God into the sphere of man, we should hope to find some kind of a supernatural characteristic, some kind of a feature, some evidence that does not avail itself of any natural explanation. One is compelled to say this is indeed a supernatural book. This is a book that is not of human origin and cannot have been of human origin because there is no explanation for this factor, for this characteristic, other than to postulate that it is supernatural, that something has, from beyond human wisdom, has given us the information that's in this book.

Now, that is what we would expect to be so if the book is, in fact, inspired by God. I don't know that God would be obliged or obligated to give us this kind of evidence, but it would certainly be helpful because the Bible asks us to believe what some would consider to be an incredible claim, namely, that the writers heard from God, the same God who made the universe, and that what they wrote was what he told them. Well, it would be very helpful if God, to our faith in this, if God would give us some kind of inescapable evidence of a supernatural character that would show that the book was not only accurate but was also supernatural in its origin.

And that is, in fact, what God has graciously done. We're looking now at the supernatural evidence, and we're not moving from the area of objective to subjective now. When I talk about supernatural evidence, I'm not talking about some subjective feeling you get, a charge you feel when God speaks to you.

I'm talking about something that is just as objective, just as external to my own experience, just as constant, whether I see it or not, whether anyone knows it to be so or not, it's still there, and if the person knows where to look, they can see it, as the evidence we've considered so far. The only difference is that the evidence we're now considering is supernatural in the sense that it does not avail itself of any natural interpretation or explanation. Now, in the Old Testament, you might recall there was a time when the Jewish people were moving away from the pure worship of Jehovah.

In fact, they had moved away from it. They weren't moving away from it. They had abandoned the true worship of Jehovah by a good bit previously and had introduced, along with the worship of Jehovah, the worship of the Phoenician god Baal.

And there were prophets of Baal and Baal worship going on in Israel, and there were prophets of Jehovah, though not very many. A thousand of them were hidden in a cave

because there was a contract out on them put out by the queen. Now, there were prophets of Jehovah and there were prophets of Baal.

The only prophet of Jehovah that came out of hiding and spoke plainly in public, although after he did so he ran away and hid, was Elijah the prophet. And he challenged the people of Israel to make a decision. He said, how long will you halt between two opinions? If Baal is God, then serve him.

If Jehovah is God, serve him. They can't both be God, so let's come to some decision about this. How do we know which prophets are hearing from the real God? The prophets of Baal or the prophets of Jehovah? And so he proposed a duel of the gods and he said, let's get the prophets of Baal out here, have them build an altar, let them put an animal on the altar for sacrifice, but let them put no fire on it and let them cry out to Baal.

And I'll do the same thing and cry out to Jehovah. And whichever God answers by fire, then we'll recognize that's the true God. And as I'm sure you know how the story goes, the prophets of Baal failed to show anything from heaven.

Nothing came from Baal. Elijah, after mocking them for their failure, built himself an altar, poured water over it to the tune of 12 barrels full and said a simple prayer and fire from heaven came and consumed the animal and the stones of the altar and licked up all the water that had run off the altar too. And so momentarily, the people were convinced.

They fell on their faces and they said, Jehovah, he is the God, Jehovah, he is the God. And they had had a supernatural proof that Elijah was a prophet of the true God and that when he spoke, he wasn't just speaking to hear his head rattle. He was speaking what he heard from God and he proved it with a supernatural demonstration.

Now, the problem with that is that only one generation of people and only a few people of that generation actually saw what happened. Those who did not see it would never have another opportunity to see it. It only happened once.

It was supernatural enough and miraculous enough, but its value as proof of the inspiration of God's prophet was limited to the few people who happened to be in the right place at the right time to see it. Even contemporaries of Elijah who were not there and didn't see it, like Jezebel herself, was unconvinced. No doubt they chalked it up as a mass hallucination or something else, you know, just like many people do with the sightings of Jesus after his resurrection.

But it was the kind of thing that today, if you're trying to prove to a skeptic, the Bible is inspired, the prophets of the Old Testament really were hearing from God. And I'll tell you how I know, because that fire came down from heaven when Elijah the prophet called it out. They'll say, sure it did.

Prove it. I don't believe it did. And you could do nothing to counter that.

They weren't there. You weren't there. You can't prove it.

It's not happening right now. It happened once and only once. Now, when the apostles went out preaching the word after Jesus ascended, we're told in the last verse of the Gospel of Mark, chapter 16, that they went everywhere preaching the word, God working with them, confirming the word with signs following.

And so certain signs and wonders went about confirming the word of the apostles. Again, that first generation of Christians and many other generations since have had supernatural confirmation of the divine origin of the gospel. When they saw the dead raised, they saw people healed, they saw demons come out of people and so forth.

Supernatural evidence that the message preached was true. But once again, not all of us have seen those kind of miracles. And we're believers.

How many unbelievers can claim to have seen such miracles? And they're the ones you want to convince. There are miracles going on today, as there have been in various periods of church history. There probably have been some miracles going on throughout the entirety of church history, though there have been periods of concentration of signs and wonders at different times.

It appears to me that the majority of signs and wonders today that I hear about, at least, are taking place on the frontiers of the missionary enterprise, where the gospel is breaking new ground and where pagan, idolatrous people need to see that the gospel they're hearing is genuinely from God and superior to the religions they already had, that God does a tremendous number of signs and wonders. In America here, where the gospel has been preached and known for a long time, we talk a lot about signs and wonders, but let's face it, we see very few. I mean, I've seen a few people healed, even of cancer and some other things like that.

Not as many as I'd like. I've seen some Christians die of cancer who were praying for healing, too. I've seen some people die and not rise when commanded to rise by faithful Christians.

I've heard of Christians raising people from the dead in modern times, and I don't doubt the stories. I mean, some of the stories might be of negligible veracity, but I think it really happens. I believe that the dead have been risen, and other things like that have happened in modern times, but not anywhere near as often as I'd like.

And I have to say that in 23 years of ministry among full gospel people, I've never seen one dead person rise. I'm not saying that to express doubts in the reality of God's power to do that, or even that he still does it. But let's face it, most of us cannot say, I know the Bible is true because I've seen a miracle that cannot be explained any other way.

And even if we could say that, even if you had seen a dead person rise, then there's

someone else could say, well, I believe that Hinduism is true because I saw Sai Baba raise the dead over in India or wherever he is. Now, that wouldn't be too good, you know, because although that would be a supernatural attestation, if the miracle we were talking about really had come from God, it wouldn't be too good if some pagan religion could claim the same kind of miracles to attest their veracity. And that is, in fact, what appears to be the case.

I don't know how genuine the miracles of Sai Baba are, but he's been claimed to have raised the dead and many other things. And people from, I mean, scientists and medical doctors and so forth, have flown from the United States and Europe over to India to see this guy. I mean, huge crowds await him.

Of course, he's a homosexual and he lives an unholy life and so forth. But in Hinduism, holiness has nothing to do with power, unlike Christianity. But the guy has claimed miracles, and I suppose that they have been attested as much as most of the modern day charismatic miracles have been attested to.

I mean, let's face it, I haven't seen Sai Baba's miracles and I haven't seen many of the charismatic miracles either. But what I'm saying is that's the problem. Most of us haven't.

Most people have not seen a miracle, although Christians today, including myself, say we still believe in miracles. How many people, last time you were witnessing, were able to prove the gospel to be true by demonstrating it with a miracle? Now, maybe we should sit around thinking, well, why aren't we doing these miracles? Maybe our faith is weak. Maybe something, something, something could come up with all kinds of explanations.

But no matter how much explaining we do, the fact remains, even the people with lots of faith, even healing evangelists, do not, every time they talk to someone about the gospel, prove it with a miracle, nor apparently can they. So this too is, that is a supernatural kind of attestation, but it's a little bit in the category of Elijah calling fire from heaven. It's a great proof that God's in there, but only if you see him.

We need something, or I should say we don't need something, but we could hope for something that is much more universal, something that anybody could see anytime they look in the right place. It's always there and it's clearly supernatural. And I believe that there is such in the Bible.

The supernatural element is there. If you'll look at Isaiah chapter 41, Isaiah lived at a time similar to Elijah's time. That is to say, Elijah's time was characterized by the Jews still professing to believe in Jehovah, but also worshiping Baal, worshiping other gods.

They were, it was a time of syncretism, which is where two or more religions get mixed together and joined in a society that's called syncretism. And in Elijah's day, it was Baal

and Jehovah. In Isaiah's day, I don't believe they were worshipping Baal, but there were other gods.

There were the high places where certain superstitious practices of the Canaanites were still taking place, and there were prophets claiming to speak for other gods and so forth. And there was idol worship. Much of Isaiah's prophecies is denouncing the worship of images and idols.

Now here, Elijah the prophet challenges the false gods to a supernatural duel, very much like Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a supernatural duel, but it's a little different kind of a challenge. And it begins in verse 21. Present your case, says the Lord.

Bring forth your strong reason, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth and show us what will happen. Let them show the former things what they were, that we may consider them and know the latter end of them, or declare to us things to come.

Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods. Now this last statement, show us the things that are going to take place after this in the future, so that we may know that you really are gods, suggests that no one other than a god could with accuracy tell what the future holds. Now there are today persons, I just heard an advertisement on the radio yesterday, some conference for small businesses coming up, where a man who's described as a futurist is going to be speaking.

You know, Alvin Toppler and these guys who write books about what's going to be like in the 90s or in the next century. These men are called futurists, and they basically make their living making predictions. They don't claim inspiration for their predictions.

They're not religious people, or if they are, it's not part of their vocation. They're not prophesying. They are analyzing data and looking at trends and so forth and trying to figure what if this pattern continues, what it's going to be like 10 years down the line or 20 years down the line or whatever.

And they are employed by big businesses to help them make their projections and make their plans and their strategies for the coming decades. These men, however, are not inspired. They don't even profess to be speaking from a god, and for that reason, of course, they can't know with certainty what's going to happen.

They can just do what any well-informed intelligent human being can do, say, well, if things don't change or if things continue to change in exactly the way they've been changing for a while in the same direction, we can make some predictions about what's going to happen. And with a certain degree, they can be accurate because sometimes the trends will continue and we'll end up right where they say they will. Anyone can make certain predictions and have them come true.

This does not take supernatural insight. It is possible to read in the newspaper the exact

time that the sun will crest over the mountains on the horizon tomorrow morning and at the exact time it'll go down today. It can be predicted with accuracy and it'll happen just that way, unless the world ends before then, which is something that no one can be quite sure of.

But given the world does not end, certain predictions can be made that do not require, in any way, supernatural information coming to a person. This is not the kind of challenge that Isaiah is putting to the false gods. He's not saying, tell us, you know, whether the sun will rise tomorrow or not.

Anyone could predict that. He's asking these prophets and their gods whether they're able to give anything like an impressive prediction of things, the kinds of things that only God would know, that no man could possibly predict. He's saying, tell us some of these things so we'll know that we should worship you, so we'll know you really are gods.

Of course, the implication is Jehovah, for whom Isaiah speaks, is God and he can do just that. He's wondering whether the others who claim to be gods can do the same. It is a distinctly divine trait to be able to tell the future with certainty, and especially certain detailed future predictions that are of long range fulfillment.

I mean, to predict what might happen tomorrow, depending on how many risks you take, how generally you make the statements and so forth, you could probably make some accurate predictions about what's going to happen tomorrow. You'd be less accurate in predicting what's going to happen a month from now or a year from now, or you probably wouldn't even come close to making any accurate predictions of what's going to happen 10 years from now. But suppose a man came and said, thus saith the Lord, 100 years from now or 200 years from now or even more, this specific thing is going to happen, and it's going to happen in this way.

And then it did. You would say, well, how did he know that? Well, he said he was speaking for the Lord, and very likely that's the truth. That's where he got it.

Now, there are certain persons that we do not recognize as prophets of God who claim to make, or it is claimed for them, that they made predictions that are accurate, even long-range. Nostradamus is a notable case that we hear about from time to time. Not too long ago, a spirit-filled Christian believed that he had heard from God that Portland was going to be destroyed with a great earthquake on May 3rd.

Well, interestingly, about the same time, students of Nostradamus were saying, well, Nostradamus said the same thing, only he said it was going to be on the 8th. Well, Portland was not destroyed by an earthquake on the 3rd or on the 8th, which shows that neither Nostradamus nor the Christian who made the prediction were hearing from God. The difference is, though, we don't call that Christian a prophet because he failed.

He failed in his prediction, therefore we do not recognize him as a prophet. The students of Nostradamus say, well, he hits it more often than not, and therefore they remain disciples of his. Jean Dixon has, you know, she's a psychic.

She believes she's a prophetess of God. She's a Roman Catholic, so she gives some credit to God for her insights. However, most observers recognize that what she is is really a psychic.

She's not a prophetess. She's an occultist, and she has made some predictions which allegedly have come true. One of the ones I remember hearing the most about was that before JFK was shot in Dallas, that she predicted that he would be assassinated when he went to Dallas, and sure enough, he did.

Now, every time Jean Dixon makes a prophecy that comes true, it gets a lot of publicity. One writer whose book I was reading a few years ago said he decided to read all the predictions that Jean Dixon had ever made and mark off how many of them had been fulfilled, and he said not one in ten came true. The ones that did come true received a tremendous amount of publicity.

The ones that did not, you never heard about them again, but she had less than a 10 percent accuracy rating. Now, you might still say, but 10 percent accuracy with those kind of predictions is still better than the average person. How many people were predicting that JFK was going to get killed when he went to Dallas? Only she was.

Well, I mean, maybe someone else was, but I mean, to be able to predict that is something the average person was not able to do. How did she know? Well, I think a very standard evangelical explanation of this would be that there are people who do hear from, not God, but from the devil, from demons. They have familiar spirits.

This is what the occult is all about. There is spiritual power. There is spiritual revelation that comes from the spiritual realm, but not from God.

And for that reason, it is possible for some people to get in touch with these sources of information and hear from them. The problem is the devil does not know the future. If he did, it would not be safe for Isaiah to make this kind of a challenge to the false gods.

Well, we will know you are a god if you can tell the future accurately. Well, if the devil knew the future, that would be no problem. He could do it.

And then we got a problem here, because Isaiah would have basically taught that if these guys can tell the future, then they are gods and we should worship them. And obviously, the implication is only the true God can really do that. Well, then how is it that certain psychics and prognosticators have hit it right sometimes, in times when it seemed really unusual? I mean, that it does seem like they got it from somewhere.

As I understand it, the devil does have a plan, but it is not the devil's plans, but God's that really happen. God is the sovereign, not the devil. The devil knows what he would like to do, but he does not know if God is going to let him pull it off or not.

He is very much under God's control. And it is possible for the devil to make a prediction to one of his spokespersons, and they make that prediction, but the devil does not know if he is going to be able to pull it off or not. He plans to.

And in some cases, he may make it. But other times, unbeknownst to the devil himself, God says, no, that is not what is going to happen. It does not happen.

Now, that being so, we would expect that a person who is getting their information from Satan would sometimes be right, and they would be right about some things that most people would not have been able to predict, because the devil knew what he was planning to do, and in a few cases, God allowed it to happen. And only the devil knew he was planning to do it, and he could tell people, and they get what it looks like and what really is supernatural insight, but they are not consistent. In fact, they are not even close to consistent.

They hit it right a few times, which gives them credibility in people's eyes, but they miss it more often than not, because God simply has not got the same plan the devil does. Really, the difference between a true prophet speaking from God and one who is simply an occultist pretending to be a prophet from God would be that the former would really be accurate all the time. If he is not accurate all the time, then he is in the same league with people like Gene Dixon, and Nostradamus, and Edgar Cayce, and people like that, who were right lots of the times, or some of the times, but not all the times.

And a person who claims to be a Christian prophet, and is only 10 percent or 50 percent accurate, is really in the same league with a fortune teller, really, or somebody who is getting information from the dark side of the spiritual world. Whereas a prophet of God, as we observed earlier in the week, is going to be always right. Because biblically, in Deuteronomy 18, Moses said, if a person is a false prophet, you stone them to death.

And the way you know if they are a false prophet is if they predict something, it does not happen. And therefore, anyone who predicted something and it did not happen, they only got one chance. And then they got stoned to death.

So, it was obviously implied that a true prophet to whom God spoke would be always right, or else God's true prophets would be vulnerable to being killed. I mean, if God allowed his prophets to be wrong occasionally, all the time they were wrong, they would be put to death. He would lose a spokesman that way, if he allowed his prophets to be wrong once in a while.

It is quite clear the Bible does not make any room for prophets of God to be mistaken

while prophesying. And therefore, the difference between the biblical writers, who are regarded as prophets by those who believe in the Bible, and other people who proclaim the future, is that the biblical prophets must always be right. Furthermore, the biblical prophets did stick their necks out much further than anyone else seems to be doing, being much more specific, and many times prophesying things 100, 200, or even in some cases 1,000, and in a very few cases 2,000 years in advance of the fulfillment, and yet specifically saying what would happen.

Now, if that is the case, if a person says, listen, I'm speaking from God, and to prove it to you, I'm going to tell you what's going to happen three years from now, and then I'm going to tell you something that's going to happen 400 years from now. The short-range prediction would be good for his generation to know that he really was a prophet. The long-range prediction would be for all generations in the future to recognize after long-term fulfillment.

And that's exactly what some prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah did. They made predictions that would be fulfilled within a few years concerning present crises that Judah and Israel were facing. For example, in Isaiah, the kings of Syria and Israel were besieging Jerusalem.

Israel and Judah were separate kingdoms at that time, and Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, was under siege from the northern kingdom of Israel and its ally, Syria. Well, Isaiah made the prediction that within three and a half years or so, by the time a newborn child would be weaned, essentially, and gain the power of speech, in that period of time, both those kings would be gone. And sure enough, within three years of the time he predicted it, both those kings were destroyed by their enemies.

And so, that was a short-range prediction which served his own generation to prove that he was a prophet of God. He also made predictions that were not fulfilled for another 200 years or 800 years in some cases, or seven, I should say. Probably the longest-range predictions that Isaiah made were probably fulfilled 700 years or so in Christ later in the prediction.

But still, that's a good long time. And many, as you probably know, many of the most specific predictions about Jesus are in the book of Isaiah, written 700 years before Christ, 720 or something like that. And by the way, the other book of the Bible, of the Old Testament, that has the most specific predictions of Christ is Psalms, which was written a thousand years before Christ.

You're aware, I'm sure, that in the New Testament, the writers quote frequently from the Old Testament. The book that is quoted most frequently as being fulfilled in Christ is the book of Psalms. And the second most frequently is Isaiah.

Now, we don't have to just look at those books, though. Every one of the prophetic

books, including some of the books that we wouldn't call prophetic, books like Exodus and Deuteronomy, have predictive prophecy in them, which Moses made. In fact, that is a normal feature of the Scripture, that there's a tremendous amount of predictive prophecy in the Scripture that is not a feature of other works that claim to be inspired.

Now, some, you know, you've got the Book of Mormon claims to be inspired, and Joseph Smith's supposed to be a prophet, and there are a number of predictions he made. But I think we mentioned a little earlier in the week that there's, it's very notable that many of the predictions Joseph Smith made did not happen. And the ones that are claimed to have happened are, in most cases, very general kinds of predictions, which maybe he did hear from the devil.

I don't know. Or maybe he was just guessing. If you're general enough, it's pretty safe, you know, because any number of events might be said to be the fulfillment of what you're talking about, because you're so unspecific.

But the point is, the Book of Mormon and its writer, Joseph Smith, do not give the evidence that the biblical writers do of being a true prophet by being 100% accurate and making very specific, risky, long-range prophecies. And it is this feature in the Bible that does not allow any natural explanation, and which is therefore a supernatural evidence that when the men wrote and said, we're writing from God, they were really writing from God, or else how'd they know these things? You know, when I was first in the ministry, which is back in the early 70s, there was a, well, the late Great Planet Earth, Hal Lindsey's book was very popular then, and other books came out that were very much like it. And if you're not familiar with these books, those books, for the most part, revived a popular interest in biblical prophecy and pointed to current events as, as Hal Lindsey thought, being fulfilled prophecies that were found in the Bible.

Turned out he was wrong about a lot of them, because the events that he was pointing to didn't turn out to agree, as things developed, didn't agree with the prophecies he thought they were fulfilling. But in the days of the late Great Planet Earth and similar books to that, a tremendous interest in Bible prophecy became fairly universal throughout evangelical circles. I was in evangelical circles, and so I commonly saw books, read books, heard sermons and lectures from people who were talking about prophecies fulfillment.

And one of the things I heard a great deal, usually by way of introduction to the subject, was that there's two sources of information about the future, the devil and God, and that those, that all men are curious about the future. All human beings are curious about the future. And many of them turn to the occult, to the devil, to get information about the future.

However, of course, God doesn't want people to go into the occult. God doesn't want people turning to the devil. So he has given a different option for us to help us satisfy our

curiosity about the future, namely, he has sent prophets.

Now, this was very commonly portrayed this way. I don't know, I can't tell you how many times in the early seventies I heard someone say either in print or in a live lecture, you know, God appreciates the fact that you're curious about the future. Therefore, he has given us Bible prophecy to tell us in advance what's going to happen.

And he does this so that we won't go to the devil to get answers about these kinds of things. As if man had this insatiable and legitimate thirst for knowledge about the future, and God was somehow obliged to tell us the future to satisfy our curiosity so that we wouldn't go right off to the devil to do it. Now, I accepted that uncritically.

It sounded right to me. I believed in fulfilled prophecy, so it sounded like a good interpretation that God gave us prophecies and then fulfill them. And the ones that are not yet fulfilled are there to satisfy our curiosity about the future, which is a natural thing we all have.

But I ran into passages in the Bible that really challenged that interpretation of the value of prophecy. First of all, the passage in Deuteronomy 18 that we've already looked at before, where it said, here's how you know if the word is not from the Lord, if it doesn't come to pass, it's not from the Lord. Now, that always seems strange to me because I thought, well, wait a minute.

If the prophet speaks in order to satisfy my curiosity about the future, the only way my curiosity will be satisfied is if I'm sure the prophet's really speaking from God, because if I have any doubts about that, I can't accept his word, and therefore my curiosity remains unsatisfied. I can only really rest assured that what he said is really what's going to happen if I know he's speaking from God. But if I can't know he's speaking from God until his prophecy is fulfilled, what's the use? After the thing happens, I don't need to be told what's going to happen.

It's right there. I know it without a prophet telling me, so it happens right in front of my face. So, what was the value of his having said so before? I couldn't put any full confidence in it until it was fulfilled, because until it was fulfilled, I couldn't know if he was really speaking from God or not.

And it seems strange to me that God would have it that way. Likewise, it seemed to me that many of the prophecies of the scripture that had been fulfilled, when I saw them in their original context, were not easy to understand, and they ended up being fulfilled in a very different way than one would have guessed. A good evidence of this is the fact that the Jews, even those who are experts in the Old Testament, many of them did not recognize Jesus.

Even though he was the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, he didn't fulfill it the way they

thought he was going to. Most of them thought he was going to have a political agenda. Most of them thought he was going to come with military strength to drive out their natural enemies, the Romans and so forth, and they didn't understand that the prophecies were talking about a man coming with a spiritual kingdom and delivering his people from their spiritual enemy, sin.

He shall save his people from their sins, not from the Romans. And they didn't understand it that way. The prophecies were specific enough that after they were fulfilled, you could see that he fulfilled them, but not specific enough that before their fulfillment, you could really predict what was going to happen exactly.

I mean, a few of them were real specific, but a lot of the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled, and we're told that he fulfilled 300 of them, a lot of those that he fulfilled, you would never have understood them that way until it happened. Then you say, well, sure, I can see it now. It was predicted in Zechariah chapter 11, I believe it is, that Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, but it doesn't say it in that way.

It's a very different kind of a way that it says it. The prophet Zechariah plays a role of a shepherd, and he plays the role of the shepherd of Israel, and then he quits. In this drama, he's acting out before the people.

He quits, and he says, pay me what you think I'm worth. And they gave him 30 pieces of silver, which he said was a niggling price, not worth very much. They didn't value him very highly.

They valued him only at 30 pieces of silver. Now, one would never predict on the basis of that acted parable in Zechariah 11 that the Messiah would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver, but when Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, those who knew him recognized that that's what Zechariah was foreshadowing. He was acting out the role of the Messiah, the shepherd of Israel, who was rejected, and the value that was placed upon him by those who rejected him was 30 pieces of silver, which is the amount that Zechariah was paid for his services, which he thought was a pretty low price.

He wasn't valued very highly by them, and Jesus was valued at that exact price by those who wished to take him and arrest him. In other words, there is seen in that acted parable a veiled prophecy about the rejection of Christ and the value of 30 pieces of silver being placed on him, and it was fulfilled, but not in a way that you would have been able to predict just reading the prophecy itself. The same is true of many of the prophecies Jesus fulfilled.

It's easy enough to see how what happened to him did fulfill something afterwards, but beforehand it wouldn't have satisfied your curiosity at all. Think of it this way. The book of Revelation.

How many of you have read the book of Revelation? How many of you now have your curiosity satisfied? Let's face it. If you read the book of Revelation, in all likelihood, you'll have more curiosity after reading it than you had before you read it, and that won't change no matter how many times you read it. I know.

I've read it times without number, and I've also read commentaries almost without number on the book of Revelation, and my curiosity is not abated. I will say that I feel that I have gained some understanding of what it's talking about, but the language is so symbolic that things could be very different as they really turn out. In fact, there's many people who've come right out and said, you know, we really won't recognize the fulfillment of these prophecies until they happen.

Well, of course, that's one opinion. Some people believe they really already have happened and that you can recognize the fulfillment, but the point I'm making is, if you think that God gives predictive prophecy to satisfy your curiosity about the future, then there's some hard explaining to do of why, A, it doesn't satisfy your curiosity. It's even hard to understand what the prophecy is talking about until the thing happens, and you can't even know for sure that the prophet was from God until it happens.

So, one gets some reason to believe that maybe this explanation of God's reason for giving fulfilled prophecy or predictive prophecy is not the right explanation. There is, in fact, an explanation. One is right here in Isaiah, tell us what will happen so we may know that you are God.

Of course, you would only know it after what they predicted was fulfilled, but that's a very important key to understanding why God gave us predictive prophecy. Look at the Gospel of John, chapter 13 and verse 19. Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples, telling them what to expect after he's gone, and he says, And now I tell you before it comes, then he gives his reason for telling them before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am he.

Okay? Now look at John 14, 29. John 14, 29. Jesus is still talking to them, and he says something very similar.

John 14, 29. Jesus says, And now I have told you before it comes, so that when it does come to pass, you may believe. Almost the same statement.

Here we have what appears to be a statement of God's purpose in giving predictive prophecy. I tell you in advance, not so that you will understand in advance of its fulfillment what is going to happen. You don't need to know that.

God knows that. You don't have to know the future. But when it does come to pass, and you recognize that what is now coming to pass was predicted by somebody who could not have possibly known it by any natural means, then you are compelled to believe that

that person who predicted it really was from God after all.

In other words, the presence of predictive prophecy in the Bible is intended as being the credentials of an inspired writer. An uninspired writer might write a book that was in many features like the Bible, historically accurate, free from errors of various kinds, but no uninspired writer could predict the kinds of things the Bible predicted before they were coming and then have them come. So what God has done is He has placed within the prophecies of His inspired writers predictions.

Now, if you are familiar with the prophets, for example, and many Christians are not, by the way. Many Christians know a few key passages out of the prophets that are good for talking about Jesus or something else, but I find that very few Christians have really read through the prophets or, after they've done it, do it again. There's a lot of the prophets that's very confusing and a lot that's very repetitious and a lot that's just burdensome reading.

But, by the way, nonetheless, the prophets can be very interesting and we hope to make them interesting when we teach through them here. But knowledge of the biblical prophets is not very widespread, even among Christians today. But if you are one of those people who has read carefully the prophets, you might have been surprised how little of what the prophets said was really predicting anything.

You usually think of a prophet as someone who tells the future. Well, they did, but most of the time they did something else. Most of the time the prophets were not so much talking about the future as they were trying to tell the nation of Israel what God had to say to them about now.

What God was doing now, why he was doing it, what was upsetting him, what they should do about it. The prophets were God's complaint department. Actually, God so frequently, in fact, always, when he sent the prophets, God had a complaint against his people.

He had a case against them. And the prophets were sent there to inform the people that God was unhappy with what they were doing and to call them to repentance and tell them what they must do if they were to avoid God's judgment. That is essentially what the prophets did with most of their breath.

But occasionally, frequently even, they would make a prediction of what was going to happen. Sometimes that prediction would be very closely related to what their sermon topic was, and sometimes it would not. Sometimes it would be just a mouth standing off by itself.

But the point is, their messages were punctuated by predictive prophecy. The prophets were not principally foretellers of the future. They were principally God's spokesmen

preaching repentance to people and giving them God's perspective on what the people were doing and what God felt about it.

Now, how would the people be expected to believe that this prophet really was telling what God thinks about their situation, really was a mouthpiece of God calling them to repentance? How do they know God is really angry? How do they know this isn't just some peeved guy who's got something in his craw and he just doesn't like what's going on and they shouldn't just ignore him? Well, that's what the predictions were for. These predictions that were made were told in advance so that when they came to pass, the listeners would know, hey, this guy wasn't just some upset guy. This guy was really speaking from God or else how could he have predicted this? So again, I'm saying the predictions in the Bible are there for the express purpose of credentialing God's spokespersons and proving that they spoke from God.

Which is why Isaiah could say to the prophets of the false gods, go ahead and tell us the future if you can so we'll know that these really are God's we're supposed to worship here. And the implication is God would be glad to do that. God is not intimidated by such a challenge.

He'll prove that he's God and that his spokesmen are his true spokesmen, that they really are hearing from God by telling the future. So the supernatural evidence that the Bible is the word of God is this element of Bible prophecy. And now I'd like to take the remainder of the time we have to talk a bit about specifics of Bible prophecy.

Now, there's a lot of, I just want you to be able to appreciate fully the degree to which this element in the scripture is an absolute proof of the supernatural origin of the scriptures. You know, I mean, if I just tell you there's a lot of prophecies in the Bible and if you're not familiar with what the Bible says and what the prophecies are, you might have the wrong impression. You might just think there's some kind of vague stuff that maybe someone could predict if they were lucky without inspiration.

Now, I want to show you some specifics here. Now, Bible scholars are not in agreement as to how much prophecy or prediction is in the Bible. One reason for that is it's not always clear what is predictive and what is not predictive.

There is a statement in Hosea 11.1 that says, when Israel was young, I loved him and I called my son out of Egypt. Now, that's not apparently a prophecy of anything. That is a historical statement.

That's the prophet reminding the people that the nation of Israel in its infancy was, God treated them like a son and delivered them out of Egypt. He's talking, of course, about the Exodus and Moses and so forth. In fact, Israel was called God's son in those days.

God told Moses, you say to Pharaoh, Israel is my firstborn. If you don't let Israel go, I'll kill

your firstborn. So, I mean, God spoke of the nation of Israel in those days as his firstborn son.

So, in Hosea it says, when Israel was young, I loved him. I called my son out of Egypt. He's just recalling a historical fact.

But, in Matthew 1, as Matthew is telling the infancy narratives of Jesus and how Joseph and Mary had to take Jesus as an infant into Egypt to escape a threat that was posed by Herod wanting all the babies killed in Bethlehem. And Jesus was taken into Egypt and later, obviously, came back out of Egypt. Matthew said, this was done to fulfill that which was written by the prophet, I called my son out of Egypt.

He's quoting Hosea 11.1. The funny thing about it is, though, that in Hosea 11.1, no one would have ever guessed that there was a prediction there of any kind. Matthew sees it as a fulfilled prophecy when it happened to Jesus. But, if you had not known the event that was fulfilled, not only would you not have known how this would be fulfilled, you wouldn't have known that it had to be fulfilled.

You would not have ever guessed from reading Hosea that this was a prediction about anything. It just looks like a historical statement. Now, you might say, well, how does Matthew justify doing that? I'll tell you how I think, although this is a bit of an aside.

But, since I've raised this troublesome point, maybe I shouldn't go from it without giving you some solution to it. I believe the apostles, when Jesus opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, which he did in Luke 24.45, he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, the Old Testament scriptures, that they saw things in the scriptures by the Spirit that were not previously seen. And, among the things they saw was that much of what happened to Israel in its history was a type and a shadow of what would happen in the personal life of Christ.

There are many parallels to the life of Jesus and the life of the nation Israel in the Old Testament. In the beginning of Israel's life, they went out into the wilderness and spent 40 years there. Jesus began his public life spending 40 days in the wilderness, during which time he was tempted, just like the Jews were tested in those 40 years in the wilderness.

Furthermore, when he was tested, he quoted from Deuteronomy three times, which was a book written about God's dealing with the Jews in the wilderness. During those 40 years, Jesus quoted, as if it was applicable to his own case, the 40 days he was in the wilderness. There are some parallels there between Israel's personal history and Christ's.

And that came to be understood, I think, by the New Testament writers. And so when Jesus, as an infant, spent some time in Egypt and then came out, Matthew said, hey, that's a fulfillment of this type. Israel, as an infant, came out of Egypt.

Jesus, as an infant, came out of Egypt. And that was what was foreshadowed by the Exodus. When Israel came out of Egypt, that was, in a sense, a type, a prophecy of sorts, that that would happen in the Messiah's own life, and it did.

So, I mean, what I'm saying is there's some real prophecy there that you wouldn't easily recognize as prophecy if you didn't know the fulfillment. And that's why scholars are not all 100% in agreement as to how much prophecy is in there. There's some kind of prophecy in disguise in there.

Now, I have read some evangelical scholars who have said that they feel that fully one-third of the Bible is predictive prophecy. I cannot accept this. I've read the Bible too many times to accept this.

I just can't picture one out of every three verses of the whole Bible being predicting something. It just isn't that way, in my opinion. Others have set the figure at one-fourth.

I've heard some, I've read some say, well, a quarter of the Bible is predictive prophecy. Once again, this is a little more realistic than a third, but I still think it's a bit high. I don't really think the figure is quite that much.

I have also read scholars who have said one-sixth of the biblical material is predictive prophecy. In fact, that's the most conservative estimate I've read anywhere. Therefore, I'll go with the conservative estimate and say, let's accept this.

At least it's probably close to the truth, if not exact. About a sixth of the Bible is predictive prophecy. That doesn't mean that one book in six books is, that out of 66 books, 11 of them are predictive prophecy, but it means that of every six verses in the Bible, there'd be, on the average, one verse that predicts something.

If that is true, and I'm going to just take that at face value because it's the most conservative estimate I've ever read, then the Bible that I'm holding here has about 1,200-something pages. Actually, this one has a little more, but the big Bible I used to use had 1,200 pages in it, and that's a good figure to figure a sixth from. A sixth of 1,200 pages would be about 200 pages, which means that if you took all the predictive statements in the Bible and put them together, it would easily fill a volume of about 200 pages, which is not a bad-sized book in itself.

And that's if you made a book containing nothing but the actual predictions that the Bible makes. And then they're scattered throughout the Bible. Obviously, we can't examine all those, there's much too many of them, but by looking at some of them specifically, we can see the nature of what we're dealing with here.

If you look with me, for example, at Ezekiel chapter 26, this is a fairly typical Old Testament prophecy. Most of the Old Testament prophets predicted things that happened either in their lifetimes or within a few hundred years of their lifetime, but they

also looked beyond that to make predictions about the coming Messiah. Ezekiel lived in the days when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was conquering most of the Mediterranean world, and he had already taken captives, including Ezekiel, out of Jerusalem and into Babylon, but he had not yet conquered every place.

And there's a prediction which was fulfilled partly in the short term and partly in the long term. In Ezekiel 26, which is predicting that Tyre, a major seaport just to the north of Israel on the Mediterranean coast, that that city of Tyre was going to be invaded numerous times, and that Nebuchadnezzar would be one of those who would invade, but that even looking beyond the time of Nebuchadnezzar, a later invasion would destroy Tyre permanently. Let me read to you just a few of the verses to get a feel for what kinds of things are being said here.

Ezekiel 26, verses 3 and 4. Verses 7 and 8. Now let's skip on down a few verses here. Verses 12 through 14. Now this is part of a much longer prophecy that occupies two or three chapters, but these are some of the things that we could extract just for examination.

What was going to happen to Tyre? Well, many nations would come successively against Tyre in her following history. That would be like the successive waves of the sea, an image that no doubt comes from the fact that it was a seaport city and the waves were continually washing up against Tyre. But he said now armies like waves are going to come successively against you.

One of those is going to be Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. He's going to do some damage. He's going to slay those in your daughter villages with the sword.

But in the course of these subsequent invasions, some other things are going to happen to Tyre. The walls will be broken down and some real strange stuff is said. The stones and the timbers and the soil of you are going to be thrown into the sea and you're going to be scraped clean like the top of a rock.

And you'll never be rebuilt. And you'll just be a place for fishermen to spread their nets. Now, in addition to being fairly strange in the case of some of these predictions, some of them seem very unlikely.

For one thing, at the time that Ezekiel lived, Tyre was the most prosperous and powerful city in that district because of its being the major seaport. There was a lot of wealth there. There was a lot of power there.

They also had some very powerful natural fortifications. Besides a walled city, there was offshore, about a half mile from the shore, a big rock, an island. And they had a second fortress out there.

And there were a number of times in Tyre's history when invaded, when their mainland

city was invaded, that people retired to the rock out a half mile out at sea to the fortress there. And they were invincible there because there was no ancient navy capable of conquering that rock island. It was too steep and so forth.

It just couldn't be. They were always safe there. So the idea that the people of Tyre would be wiped out, that the city would be destroyed and never rebuilt, and that what was at that time an extremely prosperous and powerful city would someday become insignificant enough to simply be a place for fishermen to spread their nets, a fishing village, seemed extremely unlikely.

And there is certainly no way that anyone living in Ezekiel's day would ever guess that such a thing would be true. Well, in fact, Nebuchadnezzar did come against Tyre shortly after this. That was not too remarkable.

Nebuchadnezzar was coming against everybody and therefore it wouldn't take a prophet of God to predict that probably Tyre was going to get hit too. Nebuchadnezzar did wipe out the neighboring villages of Tyre, like it says, but he didn't conquer the city. He was unable to.

Particularly the island fortress was invulnerable to him. He had no technology or navy to conquer it. So after trying for about 12 years, Nebuchadnezzar gave up and went down to Egypt and conquered Egypt instead.

The people came back from the island, you know, re-inhabited their city and so forth. And many years later, about 300 years later, another wave hit Tyre. This was the Greek armies under Alexander the Great.

Now, of course, Ezekiel lived in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, but he didn't live anywhere near the time of Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great came about 300 years later. And it was Alexander the Great principally who fulfilled these prophecies in specific detail.

Alexander destroyed the mainland city, but the people escaped to the island. Alexander sought to attack the island by sea, but failed. He couldn't do it.

No one could do it in those days. But Alexander did not give up, as Nebuchadnezzar had previously done. Alexander the Great took every stone and every bit of timber from the mainland city and threw it into the sea and built from the sea bottom up a walkway from the mainland out to the island.

It was about 100 yards wide. And the Grecian armies walked out to the island and conquered the city. Not one bit of debris was left on the mainland from the city.

It was all thrown into the sea. It was scraped clean like the top of a rock. It has never been rebuilt since then, amazingly.

One reason that it's amazing is because there's a tremendous natural spring of water there, which in that part of the world makes it a good building site. In that part of the world, water is precious. And there's a fountain of water located in ancient Tyre, which produces some enormous amount of water.

I forget the figure. And it would be a natural place for people to build a city. But from the time of Alexander on, no one rebuilt it on that location.

And you can go to Tyre today. Of course, it's in modern Lebanon. And what you'll find there is fishermen spreading their nets there.

Now, 2600 years after the prophecy was uttered. See, it's one thing to predict that Nebuchadnezzar would come. That was short range.

A lot of people might have been able to predict that with or without inspiration. It's another thing to be able to predict specifically what would happen to the city when Alexander came 300 years later. And it's even a more remarkable thing to say what will happen forever afterwards.

You will never again be rebuilt. How could anyone know that for sure? Only God could know such a thing as that. But the truth is, that's exactly how it turned out.

So far, anyway. 2300, 2600 years after Ezekiel's time, we sit here seeing things exactly the way Ezekiel predicted them, but in a way that no one in Ezekiel's time could have ever anticipated. Only God could have known.

And therefore, his ability to make these kinds of predictions argues strongly for his having been inspired by God. Look at Jeremiah 25. Jeremiah 25 is another example here.

This time, the prediction is about Nebuchadnezzar coming against Jerusalem and taking them into captivity. You may know enough of the Old Testament history to know that the Jews spent some time in captivity in Babylon. In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city of Jerusalem and took the inhabitants captive into Babylon, where they remained for about 70 years.

Well, exactly 70 years, depending on how you calculate it. The reason it's difficult to calculate the exact number is because there were three deportations in different years. He took one group of Jews into captivity, then another year he came back and took some more, and then another year he took back some more.

Likewise, the end of the captivity is hard to point to exactly, because there were three returns at the end of it back to Jerusalem. So, depending on which return and which deportation you can count from, there are three different ways to figure 70 years. Look at Jeremiah 25, verses 11 and 12.

Jeremiah wrote, of course, before the city fell to Babylon. Jeremiah was living in Jerusalem and telling the people that they were going to succumb to the Babylonian invasion. He said in verse 11, Now, this is shorter than what we read in Ezekiel, but it's got a lot of information.

It says, First of all, Jerusalem is going to be destroyed and the land is going to be in desolation, and they will serve Babylon. Already when Jeremiah had predicted this, there were some nations that already had succumbed to this, and again, it would not take miraculous source of information to predict with some certainty that probably, unless God intervened, Jerusalem too would be taken into captivity in Babylon. But, the figure 70 years is given, which happens to be the right figure for the length of the captivity.

The entire career of the Babylonian kingdom, the new Babylonian kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar, which he founded, historians tell us was 70 years. And when Babylon fell, the Jews, as well as other people who had been taken captive, were allowed to return to their homelands, and the Jews did return, many of them, and rebuilt Jerusalem and so forth. So, there's a period of 70 years there that the Jews were under Babylon, and many of them, most of them, in Babylon as captives there.

Now, Jeremiah could not possibly have known that. He was an old man when the captivity began. He didn't live to see the end of it.

And at a man's death, he wouldn't know if this captivity would continue 200 years or 2 years or how long it would last. But he gave the figure of 70 years, and that's what it turned out to be. Furthermore, he said that at the end of that 70 years, that would not just be the end of the captivity, but it would be the end of Babylon.

Now, this seemed a strange prediction in the days of Isaiah, or Jeremiah, because Babylon was the singular, indisputed, most powerful, and most invulnerable city on the face of the earth. The historian Herodotus describes for us what Babylon was like. It was surrounded by a huge wall, 300 feet tall.

That's like a 30-story building all the way around. In the days before airplanes, that's kind of hard to get over, that kind of a wall, a 30-story building. And it was a thick one, too.

Actually, there were two walls. There was one at one point, and then a little further in, there was another wall around. But the major wall was 300 feet tall, and it was so thick that eight chariots could race side-by-side on top of the wall, so it was like an eight-lane highway on top.

Now, this is a, I mean, it's not quite like the Great Wall of China, but it is an engineering feat par excellence for the ancient world to have a huge wall like this, and there seemed no way in ancient times that any invader could ever hope to penetrate those fortresses

and to conquer Babylon. And at the time when this little-known guy in this puny little country of Judea was predicting that Babylon was going to be gone and destroyed within 70 years, if Nebuchadnezzar had ever heard this prophecy, which he probably didn't, he would have laughed. He would have said, come on, who in the next 70 years is going to be able to destroy this powerful and vulnerable city of mine? Well, the fact of the matter is, 70 years later it did happen.

Babylon did fall, the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon, and let the Jews return back to their land. The captivity ended, just like Jeremiah said it would. But how could Jeremiah have known that that would happen? By the way, Babylon hasn't been rebuilt.

It is perpetual desolation. There is talk about Saddam Hussein trying to rebuild it, but even if he rebuilds a tourist attraction on the spot, he will never rebuild ancient Babylon. He doesn't even have plans for building a 300-foot wall, I'm sure.

Ancient Babylon will never be rebuilt. The Bible says it will remain perpetual desolation. Now, how did Jeremiah know that? Well, he said he got it from God.

To me, that's the best explanation going. Without hearing from God, how could anyone have made such predictions with such accuracy? We could go on, but I want to get on to something else, and we're running out of time here. I want to talk a little bit about the prophecies about the Messiah, because in addition to these kinds of political upheavals that were predicted by the prophets, this turnover of kingdoms and so forth, which was very commonly discussed in the prophets, there was this other feature of their prophecies that was equally common, and that was that they predicted the coming of a savior, of a king, of David's line that would come and rescue his people and would be their king forever and set up the eternal kingdom and he'd be the Messiah, as they called him.

And there are many prophecies about him. As I mentioned a little earlier, about 300 prophecies from the Old Testament, it is said, were fulfilled by Christ in his earthly life. Thirty-something on the one day of his death.

He fulfilled a lot of these prophecies. In fact, he fulfilled all of them. And, in my opinion, some people think that some of them remain to be fulfilled at his second coming.

I believe in his second coming, but I'm not sure if any of the Old Testament prophecies speak of it. I think that's a question we can examine when we look at the Old Testament prophecies some day when we go through those books. But, at any rate, we can say this much.

It is generally and widespread understood that 300 of the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in the earthly career of Jesus of Nazareth. Now, that should be impressive. I mean, if a man fulfilled 300 prophecies, that tells you a couple of things.

First of all, he's the guy that the prophecies were talking about. Secondly, the prophets who predicted these things had some inside line on the information. I'm not sure how they predicted so accurately what this guy would be like.

You see, the fact that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies proved two important factors. One, is that Jesus is the Messiah of prophecy. And, two, that the prophets were inspired by God when they made these predictions that were fulfilled in him.

Now, there are some who, without knowledge of the nature of the evidence, might conclude, well, you know, Jesus was a Jew who knew his Bible pretty well. Maybe he just wanted people to believe he was the Messiah, and so he kind of engineered the situation in such a way as to fulfill these 300 prophecies artificially. And, you know, he's not really the Messiah at all.

He just kind of was a good fraud and knew how to manipulate things. Well, there may be a few prophecies that Jesus fulfilled that he could have, if he were an ordinary guy, done just that with. But an awful lot of the prophecies were not in his power to change anything or to do.

A lot of the prophecies had to do with things like where he would be born, when he would be born, what his enemies would do to him, things that you can't control. You didn't control or decide where you were going to be born or when you were going to be born. That decision was made by others outside your power.

Much of what your enemies may do to you is something you would not choose and could not choose to have them do. It's not your choice, it's theirs. And we will find, we'll look at a few of these, a lot of the prophecies simply could not have been engineered, their fulfillment could not have been engineered by Jesus himself or any other man.

They simply express an inspired prediction of what would happen, and it did. There are also those who doubt this evidence because they would say, well, how do we know those predictions were made before Jesus came? That's how people talk about some of those other prophecies we've looked at in the Old Testament. How do we know those were written before the fulfillment? Well, let's just put it this way, how do we know they weren't? Nothing other than a disposition against believing in the legitimacy of prophecy would give us a hint that they weren't written in advance.

The prophets tell us what the date was when they prophesied in many cases, and their works were preserved from the time of those prophets on as being legitimately from that time. But one thing is for sure, the prophecies in the Old Testament about Jesus were not written after the life of Jesus. The Old Testament books as they exist in our Bible right now were in existence and in use among the Jews for centuries before Jesus came.

The latest of the Old Testament books was written 400 years before Christ, and the

earliest 1400 years before Christ. And they have not changed as near as anyone can tell. The Bible that was used by the Essene community in the time of Christ, the Old Testament, is no different than the Bible that we've been using for ages.

That is, the Old Testament hasn't changed any. These Essenes were not Christians, and therefore they didn't alter their Old Testament to try to make it agree with the life of Christ. They didn't even know or believe in Christ.

But the Essene community had copies of the Old Testament scriptures, and they were contemporaries with Christ, and their Old Testament scriptures say the same thing ours do. So you can't claim that these were written or contrived later than the event in order to pretend that this was all predicted. Now, when we talk about the prophecies about Jesus, we're talking about stuff like Micah 5.2, which tells us that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

That's a very small town, and relatively few people have been born there. David was born there, but very few others of importance were. But the Messiah was to be born there, or Jesus was.

Micah 5.2 tells us the Messiah would be born there. In Daniel 9, verses 25-27, we have the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks. Now, we don't have time to dissect that for you.

It's a very complex prophecy, but just to put it briefly, the time of the coming of the Messiah is pinpointed to the year in Daniel's prophecy. We'll work that out when we go through Daniel. But, Daniel 9, verses 25-27, he specifically says, "...from the time of the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah shall be, seven weeks, and three score, and nine weeks, and so forth." I mean, seven weeks, three score, and two weeks.

We're talking here about 70 weeks, and the period of time from a particular point in Daniel's day until the coming of the Messiah was predicted to the year. Again, Jesus came in the year. That was predicted.

That's something he would have no control over if he were not the Messiah. And also, of course, the fact that a forerunner would go before him, the fact that he'd be valued at 30 pieces of silver at his rejection. Prophecies like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 are very specific, talking about his rejection, his suffering, and his death.

Isaiah 53 is very well known as a prophecy, 12 verses long, entirely descriptive of Jesus' rejection and suffering and death fulfilled, though written 700 years before Christ. And Psalm 22 describes his crucifixion. Nails.

It doesn't say nails. It says, "...they pierced my hands and my feet." His hanging on the cross, his bones being out of joint, his limbs aching, and so forth, and the description of a crucified man is fairly unmistakable in Psalm 22, especially in verses 16-18, which also

includes a prophecy about not only his being crucified, but what the soldiers did at the foot of the cross. In Psalm 22, 16-18, it tells us, "...they parted my garments among them and cast lots for my vesture." The exact thing that happened at the foot of the cross, not done by Jesus, but done by his enemies, happened.

Now, one interesting thing about the psalm is that it was written 1000 years before Christ. It was written by David, who lived 1000 years before Christ. But what makes it more interesting is that this graphic description of a man crucified is written by a man who never saw a man crucified or ever heard of that as a means of execution.

Because 1000 years before Christ, crucifixion was not in use as a method of execution. That became popular under the Romans almost 900 years or more later. So, we have some striking prophecies, and just to illustrate how striking they are, I want to give you some information that you may have heard elsewhere because it's been widely published.

I claim no originality for this. This was first published either in the late 60s or the early 70s in a book called Science Speaks by a man named Peter Stoner. I don't even know if this book is still in print.

I have a used copy. I picked up one more copy, I think, because it's hard to find now. But it was called Science Speaks.

The author's name was Peter Stoner. I don't know if the book was published in the late 60s or the early 70s. I think it was late 60s.

And it contained the information I'm about to give you. And while that book is not readily available, this information has been taken from it and quoted by many sources. Josh McDowell quotes it in Evidence That Demands a Verdict.

Winky Prattney quotes it in his tract Holy Bible, Holy Truth, put out by Last Days Ministries. I've seen it quoted by many others, although I first heard it from none of those places. I first heard it from Chuck Smith, my pastor back in the 70s, who used to give this information.

Although it's been widely publicized, there's a good chance that you've heard it. But if you haven't, it's worth hearing. And if you have, it's worth hearing again.

There was a group of college students in, I believe, Santa Barbara, California, and they were Christians. But they were fascinated by this fact that Jesus had fulfilled so many prophecies and wondered really how likely it is that that would happen, if it was not so, that the prophecies were inspired and that Jesus was the Messiah. If you just wanted to give a wholly natural explanation to this and try to postulate no supernatural element to it, then you have to talk about how probable is it that this could coincidentally take place, that these people could say that a certain thing would happen about a guy and

coincidentally it happened that way.

Well, of course, this involves a question of the laws of probability, which are simply mathematical laws. They are laws, they're scientific laws, and it's a mathematical thing. If you have ten coins that are identical to each other in the way they feel and stuff, let's say ten pennies, and you put a mark on one of them with a magic marker and put the ten coins in your pocket, and you say, now watch, I will pull out the coin at random that has the mark on it, and you reach in and pull out the coin.

If you pull out the right coin, well, let me put it this way, no matter what coin you pull out, do you know what the chances are you'll pull out that coin? One chance in ten, of course. There's ten coins, only one has the mark. You got one chance because you get one pull.

One chance in ten that you get the right coin. Now, it could happen. Even though the odds are against it, you might happen to get that coin.

There's a chance in ten that you might. But suppose you do, and then you return the coin to your pocket, and you say, now I'm going to get that coin again. And you reach in, and in fact you pull out two times in a row.

Do you know what the chances of that happening? One chance in a hundred. And the chance that you pull that coin three times in a row is one chance in a thousand. And this is how the laws of compound probability work.

You have to multiply the probability of any one event happening by the probability of another separate event happening of the same kind. Now, to decide what the probability would be of a man who is not the Messiah fulfilling those prophecies in the Bible, they took eight prophecies. And they gave conservative estimates.

Of all the people who have ever lived, let's say ten billion people have lived in the world, which is probably fairly close to accurate, what are the chances that any one of them would be born in Bethlehem? Well, if we had all the facts, we could figure that out mathematically. You could say, well, over history, X number of people have been born in Bethlehem, as opposed to the total number of people born anywhere in the world. We don't have those exact figures, but conservatively, I think it can be said since Bethlehem is such a small town, probably not one in a million people have ever been born there.

When you consider all the other places in the world people have been born, probably not one person in a million has been born in Bethlehem. So, we could say the chances are, let's say just for the sake of round numbers, one chance in a million that anyone in particular would be born in Bethlehem, as opposed to somewhere else. Then they say, okay, what are the probabilities that a person would be born, well, would have a forerunner run before him, as the prophecy said that Malachi says that a forerunner

would go before the Lord.

Well, some people have had forerunners, especially kings have had people run before them, but not very many people have. The average person has not, and I dare say not one person in a million has had a forerunner going before them saying, someone after me is coming who is far greater than I am, and so forth. And therefore, let's just again to be round numbers and be conservative, let's say one in a million, chances of one in a million of anyone in particular fulfilling that prophecy.

And they go through eight different prophecies, figuring the individual probability for each one being fulfilled, and then they have to multiply these by each other. What's the probability that a person would be born in Bethlehem and have a forerunner go before him? Well, you have to multiply a million by a million. I don't even know what that figure is, but it's a lot.

And then you add a third figure, multiply that, you know, that he'd be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. Well, how many people have been betrayed for 30 pieces of silver? Relatively few. One in 10 million, perhaps.

One in 100 million, maybe. Well, multiply that by the figure you've already got, and you've got this astronomical figure coming. Once they did this process with eight prophecies, the figure they came up with was, and this was very conservative, because they gave a very conservative estimate to each one, and then they multiplied them, the compound probability that any man, by chance alone, by coincidence, would fulfill these eight prophecies that they considered, was one chance in 10 to the 17th power.

Now, that means a one with 17 zeros after it. Now, since most of us don't even have a visual fix on what that means, they pointed out that if you had this many silver dollars, it would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. And so you could illustrate the probability this way.

Suppose you had the state of Texas covered with silver dollars two feet deep. You put a magic marker mark on one of them. You have somebody hide it somewhere in the state of Texas in that sea of silver dollars.

Then you send a person blindfolded, wandering through Texas for weeks and weeks and weeks. They're blindfolded. They have to reach down at random.

At one point, just on a hunch, they reach down and grab either on the surface or as deep as they want. They can grab any silver dollar in all that sea of silver dollars. They only get one chance.

The chance that they will pull the one silver dollar that has a mark on it is one chance in 10 to the 17th power. The same as the probability that one man would fulfill those eight prophecies by coincidence. Then they took 48 prophecies the same way.

And the figure they came up to make a long story short with was it would be one chance in 10 to the 157th power that anyone would coincidentally and by chance alone fulfill those 48 prophecies. 48 prophecies, the figure is one chance in 10 to the 157th power. Now they had to use something very small to illustrate this.

They chose electrons. Because electrons at that time were about the tiniest thing anyone knew about. So tiny in fact that if you made one linear inch of electrons touching each other in a straight line, one inch of them, the number of electrons that would take would be 2.5 times 10 to the 15th power electrons to make one linear inch.

Of course that doesn't help us much. What's 2.5 times 10 to the 15th power? Well, put it this way. If you had enough electrons to make one linear inch and you could count them at the rate of 250 a minute, night and day, it would take 19 million years to count them.

That's how small they are. Now if you had a cubic inch of electrons, it would take 19 million times 19 million times 19 million years to count them at the rate of 250 a minute, day and night, for a cubic inch of electrons. Now if you had 10 to the 157th power electrons, which is the figure that comes from the 48 prophecies calculation, if you had that many electrons amassed together in a solid ball, the mass would be several thousand times larger than the known universe.

Solid electron ball with 10 to the 157th power electrons. And if you could mark one of those electrons and have somebody penetrate that ball, this mega universe of electrons, and grab at random one electron, the chance that he'd pick that one electron that was marked would be one chance in 10 to the 157th power. The same as the chance that a man coincidentally would fulfill those 48 prophecies that they considered.

Well, there's no sense in taking calculations for larger numbers than that. Can't illustrate them, can't picture them. But Jesus fulfilled 300 prophecies, which proves two things.

One, Jesus is this Messiah, unless it's a coincidence. And B, the prophets were inspired who predicted it. In other words, they were not writing from their own minds, they were telling the truth when they said they heard from God.

How else could they have known? And that is the supernatural evidence for the inspiration of Scripture. Alright, are there any questions? Alright, thank you.