

THE EPIC LIFE – BOB HALLMAN

The Reliability of the Bible – Part II

Isaiah 42:1-9

2002

Introduction

The Bible claims to be the Word of God and the ultimate source of absolute truth. Over the last several weeks we have put the text of the Bible to the test. We have explored the inspiration, history and uniqueness of the Bible. Last week we began a two part series examining the reliability of the Bible in four critical areas of research summarized by the acronym MAPS.

MAPS = Manuscripts, Archeology, Prophecy, Science (Hank Hanegraff – CRI)

I The Prophetic Evidence

In Deut 18:18-22, God makes it clear that the test of true prophecy is 100% accuracy. Having a 75% success rate wasn't good enough. In fact, anyone claiming prophetic utterance was to be stoned to death if even one of their prophecies failed to be fulfilled.

I'll leave it to you to figure out what would have happened to so-called prophets like Jean Dixon had she lived in the time of the OT. This is probably the reason that no other religious book dares to make predictions regarding future events.
(e.g. – Jehovah's Witness, Mormons, other cults)

- A. The **prevalence** of prophecy in the Bible
1. There are 737 separate predictive topics in the Bible
 2. There are 1,817 predictions in the Bible
 3. There are 8,362 predictive verses in the Bible

In fact, when the Bible was written, about 1/4 of the material contained in it was predictive.

- B. The **purpose** of prophecy
1. To reveals His **plans** to mankind
Amos 3:7 "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets."
It's remarkable to me that God has made a point to inform us of His intentions and plans in advance.

2. To authenticate His exclusive claim to **deity**

Isaiah 42:8-9 “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

During Israel’s rebellion and sin against God including idol worship, God presents the people with this challenge:

Isaiah 41:21-23 “Present your case,” says the LORD. “Set forth your arguments,” says Jacob's King. “Bring in [your idols] to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear.”

John 13:19 “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He.” -- (Betrayal prediction)

God reveals His plans in advance as an authenticating proof that He alone is God. So prophecy, at least accurate prophecy, is the exclusive domain of God. In other words, fulfilled prophecy is one of the tangible, measurable, indisputable proofs of God’s existence, reliability, and deity. It is also a phenomenal authenticating proof of the reliability of the Bible.

3. To express friendship

Amos 4:13 “He who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, he who turns dawn to darkness, and treads the high places of the earth -- the LORD God Almighty is his name.”

John 15:15 “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

God reveals His plans in advance as an expression of friendship. Amos tells us that God reveals His thoughts to man. And Jesus explains the reason for His self-disclosing communication – He considers you to be friend.

Illustration: My relationship with Becky

Love – girlfriend – best friends

God not only loves us, He likes us!

4. To authenticate the **Bible** as God-inspired

2 Peter 1:20-21 “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

C. The **persuasiveness** of prophecy

The Old Testament contains over 300 hundred prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah -- all of which were fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ.

1. The probability of 8 prophecies being fulfilled

a. His place of birth - Bethlehem

Predicted in Micah 5:1-2 – 500 years before Christ's birth

Fulfilled in Matthew 2:1

b. **Time** of birth

Predicted in Daniel 9:25-26

483 years from the day King Cyrus made the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah's Triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Fulfilled to the day in Matt 21:9

c. Manner of birth – a virgin birth

Predicted in Isaiah 7:14

Fulfilled in Matthew 1:18-22-23

d. The price of His **betrayal** – for 30 pieces of silver

Predicted in Zechariah 11:11-13

Fulfilled in Matthew 26:15

e. Manner of death - crucifixion

Predicted in Psalms 22:16

This prophecy was written 800 years *before* the Romans invented crucifixion.

Fulfilled in Luke 23:33

f. Piercing of his **side**

Predicted in Zechariah 12:10

Fulfilled in John 19:34

g. People mocking

Predicted in Psalms 22:7-8

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:29

h. **Burial** – In a rich man's grave

Predicted in Isaiah 53:9

Although He was to be buried with the wicked, He would end up being buried in the tomb of a rich man.

Fulfilled in Matthew 27:57-60

He was buried in the tomb of a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph.

Prophecy: Silver dollar illustration

Dr. Peter Stoner, who was a professor at Pasadena College, wrote a fascinating book called, *Science Speaks*. In this book he calculated the chance probability factor of one man fulfilling just these eight Messianic prophecies. Using the law of compound probabilities, he estimated that the chances were 10 to the 17th power (10 followed by 17 zeros).

In order to comprehend this staggering probability, it would be the equivalent of:

1. Taking 10^{17} silver dollars and laying them on the face of Texas.
They will cover all the state two feet deep (Texas is 267,339 square miles).
Based on the land mass of the Hawaiian Islands (6,424 square miles), it would blanket every island in the entire chain 85 feet deep in silver dollars.
2. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass.
4. Blindfold a man and tell him he has only one chance to pick up one marked silver dollar. What chance would he have of getting the right one? The same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man.

2. The probability of 16 prophecies being fulfilled

If we added another 8 prophecies, for a total of 16, the chance factor would be raised from 10^{17} to 10^{45} . This many silver dollars would create a ball 30 times bigger than the distance to the sun, which is 93 million miles away. Once again, stir it up and then send out a blinded folded man. If he picked the marked silver dollar, that would be the chance probability factor of Jesus fulfilling just 16 of the OT Messianic prophecies.

Each of the 8 Messianic prophecies we considered were totally beyond Jesus' control to fulfill and yet He met each of them perfectly and completely. Remember, these are only eight prophecies, Jesus literally fulfilled 332 prophecies!

II The Scientific Evidence

The Bible is full of scientific information that anticipates 20th century discoveries in the fields of astronomy, biology, geology, physics, and archeology with astonishing accuracy and absolute reliability.

Sir William Herschel:

“All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truths contained in the Sacred Scriptures.”

A. Time, space and matter

The concept of a finite universe was one of the radical discoveries of the 20th century, made by three British astrophysicists (Hocking, Penrose and Ellis) who proved in the 1960s and 70s, that indeed space, time and matter had a beginning. Prior to the 20th century, scientists believed that time, space and matter had always existed.

The Bible anticipated at least 4,000 years ago a 20th century discovery that the universe is finite and that time, space and matter had a beginning.

Gen 1:1 “In the beginning [time] God created the heavens [space] and the earth [matter].”

2 Timothy 1:9 [He] has saved us and called us to a holy life-not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time ...”

Titus 1:2 “... a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time ...”

Robert Jastrow, a NASA astronomer, mentioned in the forward of his book, *God and the Astronomers*, that he is an agnostic (ignoramus in Latin). He examined the scientific evidence from the 20th century with regard to astronomy and cosmology and said this: “Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world. The chain of events leading to man commenced suddenly and sharply at a definite moment in time in a flash of light and energy.

In another book he wrote in 1989 entitled, *Journey to the Stars*, he said this:

“Most remarkable of all, astronomers have found proof that the universe sprang into existence abruptly in a sudden moment of creation as the Bible said it did.”

B. Atomic structure

Hebrews 11:3 “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”

This passage anticipates the 20th century discoveries of atomic structure.

What we see are made of structures which are not visible. We now know today that everything that we see or touch is made of little particles called atoms. Atoms are so small that they can't be seen with the naked eye. So the writer of Hebrews was right!

C. Earth **suspended** in space

During ancient time many people believed the earth rested on the shoulders of Atlas, a Greek god. Others believed that the earth rested on turtles. Some people believe it rested on elephants. Of courses no one was ever able to explain what Atlas, turtles or elephants were standing on. But that was the common belief for the better part of human history.

Yet, 4,000 years ago Job confidently asserted in Job 26:7 that “[God] spreads out the northern [skies] over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing.”

So, how did Job know about **Gravity** and deep space? Was it just a good guess?

By the way, there are dozens of statements in the book of Job that preempt 20th scientific discoveries that, prior to this century, were unknown.

D. Round earth

For most of human history, man was convinced that the earth was flat.

But the Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 40:22 that “God sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.”

The literal meaning of the Hebrew word translated "circle" is "**Sphere**".

Considering the fact that Isaiah lived 700 years before Christ, how did he know that?

E. Ocean currents

In 1800s, sailor Matthew Fontaine Morey, circumnavigated the globe from 1826-1830.

In 1848 he published maps in *The Physical Geography of the Seas* detailing the oceanic currents of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Unfortunately, Mr. Morey’s discovery was old news for David and Isaiah by 2,000 years.

Psalms 8:8 “... the fish of the sea that swim the paths of the seas.”

David and Isaiah lived in the Mediterranean Sea. How did he know about ocean currents, unless the book you hold in your hand is of supernatural origin?

F. Wind patterns – the Jet Stream

The Jet Stream, another 20th century meteorological discovery, was long ago described by King Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 1:6 “The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.”

G. Water cycles

300 years ago two European scientists, Pierre Perault and Edmee Marriott, discovered the concept of oceanic evaporation. They proved that evaporation from the ocean produced clouds and that those clouds go over the land producing rain, which then go into the rivers, which then run back into the sea.

Unfortunately for Mr. Perault and Mr. Marriott, they were scooped by over 3,000 years.

Amos 9:6 “... He calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out over the face of the land -- the LORD is his name.”

Ecclesiastes 1:7 “All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.”

H. The vast number of stars in the universe

Long before the first telescope, many ancient cultures charted the stars and believed that there were roughly 4,000 to 6,000 stars in the universe -- that is until the invention of the telescope. Astronomers now *estimate* that there are 100 billion stars in our galaxy alone, and 100 billion galaxies in the universe. If you were to count the stars at a rate of 10 per second, it would take you over 100 trillion years to count them all!

Once again, the Bible preempted modern scientific discovery by almost 3,000 years

Jeremiah 33:22 “I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore.”

How could Jeremiah have known? A lucky guess? Or did the one who made the stars give him some inside information?

I. The expanding universe

Scientists have discovered that the galaxies are moving away from each other and that the universe is expanding. If it is expanding, then the only logical conclusion is that, at one time, the universe was condensed down to a point of origin, which means that the universe had a beginning.

Once again, we have another 20th century discovery that was anticipated by the Bible thousands of years in advance of modern science and astronomy.

Psalms 104:1-2 “Praise the LORD, O my soul -- He stretches out the heavens like a tent”

Isaiah 42:5 “This is what God the LORD says--he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it.”

Stretch out = Present perfect tense = “He continues to stretch it out”

J. The **orbit** of the sun

Ancient civilizations could see that the heavenly bodies moved through the sky, but they had no concept of orbits. Yet, David in Psalm 19:6 says that “[The sun] rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other.”

Now we know that the sun does not make a circuit around the earth, but rather a circuit around the Milky Way galaxy as it spins in the universe.

How is it possible that David, thousands of years ago, could know about planetary orbits?

K. The Laws of Thermodynamics

In the last 150 years the laws of thermodynamics have been some of the most well proven laws of science and physics in history.

1. The Law of Conservation Of Matter

The 1st Law of Thermodynamics states that all the matter in the universe is being preserved or conserved. In other words, matter and energy cannot be created or destroyed. You can convert it from a gas to a solid or to a liquid and back again, but you cannot create new atoms. Nor can you destroy existing atoms.

Once again, this was information that was long ago recorded for us in the Bible.

Genesis 2:2-3 “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.”

Ecclesiastes 3:14 “I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.”

2. The Law of Entropy

Most people prior to the last several centuries believed that the universe was eternal and that it would never wear out or grow old.

But the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics states that all matter is moving from a state of order to disorder and that the amount of available energy in the universe is decreasing. The universe is getting older, it is wearing out and it is cooling off.

Ps 102:25-26 “In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded.”

Mt 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

Listen to what some modern scientists are saying about 20th century discoveries as they relate to the Bible:

1. One time atheist and materialist Paul Davies recently said, *"[There] is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all. ... It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe. ... The impression of design is overwhelming."*
Wordonfire.org. <https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/how-the-fine-tuning-of-the-universe-points-to-god/>
2. Astronomer George Greenstein wrote, *"As we survey all the evidence, the thought insistently arises that some supernatural agency ... must be involved. Is it possible that suddenly, without intending to, we have stumbled upon scientific proof of the existence of a Supreme Being?"*
Inspiringquotes.us <https://www.inspiringquotes.us/author/8679-george-greenstein>
3. And finally, NASA astronomer Robert Jastrow, a professed agnostic, eloquently sums up the implications of these recent cosmological discoveries when he writes, *"For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."*
goodreads.com https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/87585.Robert_Jastrow

Conclusion

It is my prayer that from what you have learned today, you will be convinced in your own mind that Christianity is credible because it is based on a book that is not only extremely reliable, but also because there is tremendous evidence that points to the fact that God wrote this book and gave it to us, and it is the only authoritative and reliable source of revelation regarding God's character, the origin of man, his nature, his spiritual need, his destiny, and the way of salvation.

John 14:6-7 “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Resources for Overview of the Bible Series:

Halley, H. 1874-1965, (2000). *Halley's Bible Handbook*. Zondervan Publishing House.
McDowell, J. (1992). *Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Vols. I and II*. Thomas Nelson.
McDowell, J. (1999). *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Thomas Nelson.

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