

IS JESUS REALLY THE SON OF GOD?

(PART 2)

CHAPTER 10

I. If God became a human we would expect that this person's words would be the greatest ever spoken.

What does the Bible say about Jesus' words?

*"Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. **They were amazed at his teaching**, because his message had authority."*
(Luke 4:31-32)

*"Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life.**'"*
(John 6:68)

*"Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, 'Why didn't you bring him in?' '**No one ever spoke the way this man does,**' the guards declared."*
(John 7:45-46)

One writer said this about the words of Jesus...

*"... the Gospels are the greatest literature ever written. They are read by more people, quoted by more authors, translated into more languages, represented in more art, set to more music, than any other book or books written by any man in any century, in any land. **Why is this?** Because they are the greatest words ever spoken. The words of Jesus deal clearly and authoritatively with the greatest questions and biggest problems in the human heart. Jesus answers questions like:*

Who is God? Does He love me?

Does He care for me? What should I do to please Him?

How does He look at my sin? How can I be forgiven?

Where will I go when I die? How must I treat others?

*No other man can answer these fundamental human questions as Jesus answered them. **They are the kind of words and the kind of answers we would expect God to give...**"ⁱ*

The historian Phillip Schaff described the words of Christ in this way... *"This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced the effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished the themes for more sermons, discussions, learned volumes, works of art and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times."ⁱⁱ*

II. If God became a human we would expect this person to fulfill prophecy

(...if he were to present himself as Israel's Messiah).

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, people recognized that the Hebrew writings (Genesis through Malachi) were the very words of God. Serious students of these Hebrew books understood that God was preparing to send a special person to earth who would save people. This person was called "*Messiah*" in the Hebrew language which translates to "*Christ*" in the Greek language. These words literally mean "*The Anointed One*." In the ancient world, when a man was chosen to be a King, he was anointed or oil was put on his head.

The people of Israel anticipated and expected a Messiah.

Question: How would they know when the Messiah arrived?

Answer: God told the people of Israel what the Messiah would be like before he was sent.

The Old Testament contains more than 300 prophecies about the Messiah.

Here are just a few examples of prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament:

1. The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham, Jacob, Judah, Jesse and King David. (Genesis 22:15-18, 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Isaiah 11:1-10; 2 Samuel 7:16; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Isaiah 9:6-7)
2. The Messiah would be the child of a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14)
3. The Messiah would be born in the small city of Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2)
4. The Messiah would be betrayed by a friend and would be sold for 30 pieces of silver. (Zechariah 11:12-13)
5. The Messiah would suffer and die for all people. (Isaiah 53)
6. God even told the people of Israel exactly how the Messiah would die. (Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 53)

The people of Israel knew that the Messiah had to fulfill all the prophecies. Otherwise, he could not really be the Messiah that God promised. These prophecies in effect formed a figurative fingerprint that only the true Messiah could match.ⁱⁱⁱ This gave Israel and us a way to rule out imposters and validate the credentials of the true Messiah.

Against astronomical odds, Jesus, and only Jesus, matched this prophetic fingerprint.^{iv}

Of all the prophecies and statements about the Messiah in the Old Testament – Jesus fulfilled every single one of them.

We learn from reading the New Testament that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham, Jacob, Judah, Jesse and King David. His mother was a virgin when he was born and he was born in Bethlehem. He was betrayed by his friend for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus suffered and died exactly the way the Old Testament described. In fact, when the prophecies were given about the Messiah being “*pierced*,” (Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 22:16) stoning was the common method of execution. Crucifixion was not used as a form of execution until much later in history. Isaiah 53:12 says that the Messiah would be “*numbered with the transgressors*.” Jesus was crucified with two thieves. Psalm 22:18 indicates that the Messiah’s garments would be divided and lots would be cast for his clothing.

“The hardened, burly soldiers of Rome at the cross centuries later, did not get their Bibles out and say ‘Hey, fellows, this is our cue. Here is where we are supposed to fulfill prophecy and gamble for the clothes of Jesus Christ!’ Nevertheless, they did! They gambled for his garments (Matthew 27:35). It is doubtful they knew or cared about the prophecy at all, but how significant that men even in unbelief perfectly fulfill the Word of God. It impresses me too, that Psalm 69:21 dares to say centuries in advance that he would be offered gall and vinegar to drink. He was! (Matthew 27:34) Only God could know that, centuries in advance. There are thousands of things he could have been offered. He could have been offered nothing! The prediction that he would be buried in a rich man’s tomb, is spectacular. (Isaiah 53:9) That simply did not happen to one who died as a criminal. Yet look at Matthew 27:57-60 and see this ‘impossible’ fulfillment as Joseph of Arimathea risked his riches, his reputation, and his life, to claim the body of Jesus to bury in his own unused tomb!”^v

A mathematician who wrote a book called *Science Speaks* decided to determine the mathematical probability that any one man could fulfill just 8 of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. The number came to 1 chance in 10 billion.^{vi}

This is amazing when you realize that Jesus fulfilled 30 Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah (which were written from 500 to 1,000 years before his birth) during the final 24 hours of his life.

Max Lucado writes, “*Did you know that in his life Christ fulfilled 332 distinct prophecies in the Old Testament? What are the mathematical possibilities of all these prophecies being fulfilled in the life of one man? One chance out of ...*

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(That’s ninety-seven zeroes!) Amazing!”^{vii}

“The odds alone say it would be impossible for anyone to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies. Yet Jesus – and only Jesus throughout all of history – managed to do it.” (Louis Lapidès, who grew up in a conservative Jewish home but became a Christian and later a minister after studying the prophecies).^{viii}

Jesus Christ is the only figure in history whose birth, life and death were predicted and described hundreds of years before he was born.

III. If God became a human we would expect this person to satisfy the spiritual hunger in people.

Jesus claimed that he (and he alone) could satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst.

Here are some examples of these claims:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28)

“...whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:14)

“Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.’” (John 6:35)

“...If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” (John 7:37)

“...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

Millions and millions of people all over the world agree that only Jesus Christ can satisfy a person’s spiritual hunger and that when you follow Jesus and his teachings, life becomes peaceful, joyful, hopeful and meaningful.

When I lived in Florida several years ago, I had the opportunity to study the Bible with a man from Egypt named Salah. Salah was a Muslim. One day we got into a discussion about Jesus. I asked him, *“What does the Koran say about Jesus?”*

He told me that the Koran tells us that Jesus was a prophet who was born of a virgin named Mary and that Jesus could perform miracles and was without sin.

I asked my friend, *“Do you really believe that an ordinary man can be without sin?”*

He immediately changed the subject. He said, *“I don’t want to talk about Jesus anymore.”*

The next time we met together, Salah said to me, *“Do you know why I can’t believe that Jesus was the Son of God?”* He then said, *“Because of this ...”* (He spread his arms apart like Jesus on the cross). *“This is weakness! God is God and can’t be weak.”*

I asked him, *“Do you love your children?”*

He said, *“Of course, I love my children!”*

I asked him, *“At what lengths would you go to show your love for them?”*

It seemed that he momentarily forgot the context of our conversation and passionately told me, *“Russ, I would die for my children!”*

I said, *“You see, that is not weakness. In fact, that is ultimate strength in an act of ultimate love.”*

Salah angrily changed the subject, said good bye, walked out of the room and I never saw him again.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God ... For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.”

(1 Corinthians 1:18, 25)

NOTES

ⁱ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 170-171.

ⁱⁱ Philip Schaff, *The Person of Christ* (American Tract Society, 1913).

ⁱⁱⁱ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 172.

^{iv} Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 267.

^v Floyd McElveen, *God's Word, Final, Infallible and Forever* (Grand Rapids: Gospel Truths Ministries, 1985), 40.

^{vi} Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969), 109.

^{vii} Max Lucado, *He Chose the Nails* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 96. Citing William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John, of New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 431.

^{viii} Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 183.