

## The Prophecies of Jesus

**Intro:** Many years ago noted philosopher and unbeliever Bertrand Russell was reportedly asked in a magazine interview, “Under what condition would you believe in God?” Russell gave the following response, “Well, if I heard a voice from heaven and it predicted a series of things; and they came to pass, then I guess I’d have to believe there’s some kind of supernatural being.”

Russell’s criteria for faith is reasonable. Indeed, Isaiah, the prophet of God, revealed this as a reasonable test and proof that the Lord was the true God. Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord challenged the idolatrous gods of the Ancient Near East with this test:

*“Present your case,” the LORD says. “Bring forward your strong arguments,” The King of Jacob says. Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place; As for the former events, declare what they were, That we may consider them, and know their outcome; Or announce to us what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come afterward, That we may know that you are gods; Indeed, do good or evil, that we may anxiously look about us and fear together.” (Isaiah 41:21–23)*

So we could say that the Lord Himself validated Russell’s criteria for believing in God. And in fact we could also say, “By the infidel’s own standards, the existence of God has been clearly established through the prophecies of Jesus Christ.” Let me show you how.

## The Prophecies of Jesus

**Consider how the prophecies of Jesus clearly establish Russell’s requirements.**

In the case of Jesus Christ, God not only spoke from heaven; he came down to earth and spoke in person.

Jesus, the Word who was “with God” and “was God” came and in the presence of His creatures, to use Russell’s words, “predicted a series of things that came to pass.”

***Consider these prophecies of Jesus that have already been fulfilled. While on earth Jesus predicted:***

***That He would die in Jerusalem by crucifixion at the instigation of the Jews (Mt. 16:21).***

*“From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.” (Matthew 16:21)*

Note in this prophecy that Jesus predicted the place of His death—Jerusalem. He predicted the instigators of His death—the elders, chief priests and scribes. And in another text he even predicted the means of His death:

*“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;” (John 3:14, NASB)*

Later the angels would confirm this when they said to those at the empty tomb:

*“He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”* (Luke 24:6–7)

To those around Jesus, this prophecy would have seemed to have been the most unlikely prophecy to have come to pass.

We would not have expected that a good man like Jesus to be killed in the holiest city in Israel.

We would not have expected that those regarded as the moral religious leaders would stoop to such an immoral action in defiance of the Laws of God they were authorized to teach and enforce.

Moreover crucifixion was reserved for the vilest of criminals. How would someone want to crucify someone as innocent and harmless as Jesus?

Yet, everything happened just as Jesus said. But Jesus also prophesied...

***That His disciples would flee and that Peter would deny Him three times (Mt. 26:31-35).***

*“Then Jesus \*said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.’” “But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”*” (Matthew 26:31–32)

This prophecy also seemed implausible to the disciples. After all, had they not followed Him for over three years? Had they not already witnessed the hostility of the religious elite against Him, yet they had not abandoned him? Peter especially found the words of the Lord incredible:

*“But Peter answered and said to Him, “Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a cock crows, you shall deny Me three times.” Peter \*said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.”* (Matthew 26:33–35)

Think about what you are hearing. No one in that company thought that Jesus was right in His prediction; yet Jesus was proven to be right and all the others were proven to be wrong. In a matter of hours the disciples fled the scene of Jesus’ capture; and Peter denied Jesus three times before the next day dawned.

But Jesus also prophesied...

***That He would be raised from the dead three days later (Mt. 16:21; Jn. 2:19).***

We've already read the text of Mt. 16 where Jesus predicted his death and also His resurrection on the third day; but now also consider his words at the very beginning of His ministry in Judea three years before:

*“Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”” (John 2:19)*

Of course, those present that day would have missed the hidden meaning in Jesus' words. He was in the temple complex, so it was natural for them to think he was talking about the physical temple complex. But actually Jesus was making a more profound argument which the disciples would later realize.

Jesus was talking about His body. And just as temples were built for gods to live in, so the Lord prepared a temple for His Son to live in. His body truly was the temple of God. But note that Jesus also declared that He would die and that on the third day he would raise it up.

As Christians we've become quite accustomed to that prediction; and we do not find it difficult to accept; but in Jesus' world, no one believed in individual self-resurrections from the dead. The Greeks considered the idea of resurrection preposterous. The Jews thought of the resurrection only as a general phenomenon for the end of the age. But the idea of a single person raising himself would have seemed entirely implausible and even impossible. What dead man ever had the power to raise himself from the dead? Yet once more, Jesus' words were fulfilled just as He spoke them. But Jesus also prophesied...

***That miraculous power would come upon His disciples by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5).***

*“And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)*

*“And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”” (Acts 1:4-5)*

It might be helpful to remember that it was not common for the Holy Spirit to come upon large groups of people all at once. In fact, this had occurred rarely in the many centuries of religious history.

But though in some ways implausible to Jesus' hearers, it turned out exactly as Jesus had predicted. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came simultaneously on all the twelve and empowered them to speak in tongues and glorify God, just as Jesus had prophesied several weeks before (Ac. 2).

What Jesus prophesied came to pass just as He had said; but Jesus also prophesied...

***That they would be persecuted from city to city as they preached the gospel (Mt. 10:16-23).***

Well before His death, Jesus spoke with His disciples about their future mission in proclaiming the gospel:

*“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves. “But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.” (Matthew 10:16–18)*

Jesus knew that these disciples would go out with the message of the gospel, even before his death and resurrection. He predicted that they would be opposed and persecuted by both the Jews and by the Romans.

And we only have to read the book of Acts to see the fulfillment as the apostles were opposed by both the Jews and the Romans, suffering imprisonment, beatings, and even martyrdom for their faith. Jesus predicted it long before its fulfillment.

***That Jerusalem would be surrounded by the Romans, the temple destroyed, and its people killed (Mt. 24:1-28).***

While still on the earth and from the vantage point of the Mount of Olives Jesus predicted that the decorous Herodian temple would be razed to the ground by the Romans.

*“And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, “As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.”” (Luke 21:5–6)*

Later that same day Jesus indicated that Gentiles would surround Jerusalem and destroy it.

*““Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people, and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Luke 21:23–24)*

Some might have questioned how it could be that the Lord would allow His own holy city and temple to be destroyed by such wicked men. It might have been argued that the religious leaders were working cooperatively with the Romans to prevent such a thing from ever happening again

Yet forty years later Jesus’ prediction came true just as He had predicted. Historian Flavius Josephus records the devastating

destruction of Jerusalem and the crucifixion of many of its citizens in AD 70.

Jesus' predictions of the future have been to this point completely accurate. Six amazing and implausible predictions all fulfilled just as Jesus had predicted; and there are several more that could be cited. So now, let's go back to Bertrand Russell's statement: "*Well, if I heard a voice from heaven and it predicted a series of things; and they came to pass, then I guess I'd have to believe there's some kind of supernatural being.*" By Russell's own reasonable standard, we could say "a voice from heaven predicted a series of things that came to pass!"

Inasmuch as God has announced predictions that have come to pass, what reason could one give for not believing in Him? Jesus' power to describe His own destiny as well as that of His disciples and the Jewish people is a clear indication of His claim to be the Son of God and the apostles' claim in His behalf as well.

***But might I suggest that Jesus made other prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled***

He also prophesied that...

He would return again from heaven (Mt. 25:31).

All that were in the tombs would be raised from the dead (Jn. 5:28-29).

All men would be judged by Him, some being sentenced to eternal punishment and others rewarded with eternal life (Mt. 25:32-46).

And based on Jesus' record so far, I'd say those predictions that remain unfulfilled are as certain to come to pass as those already fulfilled. Are you ready for the fulfillment of them?

**Conclusion: So I ask you, "Have you put your faith in Jesus on the basis of the proof He has given to us?" If not, you need to do that. If you wait until you see the fulfillment of His other predictions it will be too late. You will be unprepared when Jesus comes; you be unprepared for the resurrection and the final judgment.**