

PROPHECY ARGUMENTS IN APOSTOLIC AND CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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***Abstract:** Prophecy arguments are prominent in the Old and New Testaments. Regrettably, however, their influence has waned recently, in part because of challenges from anti-supernatural and atheistic worldviews. This article argues that prophecy arguments can be made relevant and powerful for contemporary audiences by (1) documenting fulfilled Bible prophecies that meet strict criteria for public evidence, and (2) analyzing prophecy data with a statistical method that accounts not only for luck but also for potential objections about biased data. A strong case for fulfilled Bible prophecy is an asset for Christian theology and witness because of its immediate implications for God's existence, the case for miracles, the authority of Scripture, and human dignity and destiny.*

***Key words:** apologetics, atheism, Bethlehem, bias, miracles, prophecy, revelation, statistical analysis*

Prophecy arguments are important in the Bible. Foremost is the argument that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah. Also important is the argument that Bible prophecies are miraculously and uniformly accurate because of revelation from God, who alone knows the end from the beginning.

The plausibility and influence of prophecy arguments has waxed and waned over the centuries and across nations or cultures, but recently it has waned. A major problem is atheistic and anti-supernatural worldviews that are common currently, especially in academia. Another problem is amateurish and embarrassing arguments that have been popularized by some prophecy enthusiasts.

For the benefit of the church and the world, the time is right to restore prophecy arguments to the prominence that they have in the biblical testimony. Two decades ago, we published an article in this journal on fulfilled Bible prophecy.¹ The present article builds on that article and on important scholarly advances since then in order to greatly strengthen prophecy arguments.

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¹ Robert C. Newman, John A. Bloom, and Hugh G. Gauch Jr., “Public Theology and Prophecy Data: Factual Evidence that Counts for the Biblical World View,” *JETS* 46.1 (2003): 79–110.

I. APOSTOLIC APOLOGETICS

How important are prophecy arguments in the apostolic defense of the gospel, that is, in apostolic apologetics? As F. F. Bruce documented, “The argument from prophecy and the argument from miracle were regarded by first-century Christians, as by their successors in the second and many following centuries, as the strongest evidences for the truth of the gospel.”² But he continued, “Today they are more often felt to be an embarrassment, partly no doubt because they represent an attitude to the Old Testament and a world-view which are out of harmony with dominant modes of contemporary thought.”³ He wrote this over 60 years ago, and the current situation remains challenging.

Bruce also observed that the “New Testament apologists” realized that “while Jesus remains the same, and the gospel is unchanging, the means adopted to defend the faith may vary widely according to the situation in which the apologist finds himself and the public with which he is confronted.”⁴ In particular, he described how the apostles adapted their message for Jews, pagans, Romans, and heretics, and he commended their example: “It may be that a study of New Testament apologetic will help us to discover lines along which the defence of the faith should be conducted in our own day, when necessary allowances have been made for the differing situations of the first and twentieth centuries” (and now the twenty-first).⁵

The thesis of this article is that the unchanging apostolic message includes the choice of principal arguments for the gospel in the NT and that prophecy arguments can be adapted for contemporary audiences in a manner that makes them relevant and powerful.⁶ Rather than allowing “dominant modes of contemporary thought” to embarrass and discredit prophecy arguments, these apostolic arguments can demolish worldviews that are “out of harmony” with reality.

II. COMPETING HYPOTHESES

Isaiah expressed the argument for prophecy forcefully in the context of competing religions. “Present your arguments ... tell us what is going to happen ... so that we may consider them.... Declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so that we may know that you are gods” (Isa 41:21–23). His claim is that only the true and living God knows “the end from the beginning” (46:9–10), unlike false gods that are “less than nothing” (41:24). Millennia later, Isaiah’s argument is still relevant because belief in other gods is still widespread, involving a sizable portion of the world’s population of almost eight billion persons. However,

² Frederick F. Bruce, *The Apostolic Defence of the Gospel* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1959), 11–12.

³ Bruce, *Apostolic Defence*, 12.

⁴ Bruce, *Apostolic Defence*, 10.

⁵ Bruce, *Apostolic Defence*, 10.

⁶ Christian apologetics has many additional sorts of excellent arguments, which provide valuable supplements to the apostolic arguments, if and only if the apostolic arguments retain primacy.

the failure of oracles and psychics, both ancient and modern, has already been documented, so this context of competing religions need not be reiterated here.⁷

Instead, the context emphasized here is the challenge from atheism because secular and anti-supernatural worldviews are currently quite influential, especially in universities. Isaiah's prophecy argument works not only against false gods, but also against atheism with no God, which likewise is "less than nothing."

The accuracy of Bible prophecies and more fundamentally whether God exists are controversial, so two competing hypotheses are considered here. The hypothesis from the Christian worldview features revelation, H_R that "Because of revelation from God, who alone knows the end from the beginning, Bible prophecies exhibit miraculous accuracy that cannot be explained by luck and bias." And the hypothesis from an atheist or naturalist worldview features luck, H_L that "Because of the severe limitations of unaided humans for predicting the distant future, Bible prophecies exhibit miserable accuracy, with no more fulfillments than can be explained by luck and bias."

In essence, the competing hypotheses H_R and H_L amount to saying that the Bible is, or is not, a revelation from God. These hypotheses are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. Given this logical structure, necessarily one hypothesis is true and the other false.

The meaning of "God" in hypothesis H_R merits clarification for a diverse audience that includes Christians, atheists, and others. For Christians, God is revealed by and known from the Scriptures and from personal and corporate experience. For atheists, God is a nonexistent being, believed in only by mistaken persons. For the present hypothesis set, the meaning of "God" is specified by the phrase "who alone knows the end from the beginning." This specification is both woefully inadequate as a satisfactory description of God, and fully sufficient to designate God uniquely—which is all that is needed for present purposes. Knowing the end from the beginning—omniscience—is one of the incommunicable attributes of God that he alone possesses. Another is having existence in himself—aseity—rather than derivative existence that is contingent on other persons or things or events. Any single incommunicable attribute suffices to identify God uniquely, and all identify the same Being. Advocates of H_R and advocates of H_L disagree about which hypothesis is true, but all participants easily find both hypotheses comprehensible—as clearly shown by their ability to disagree.

Isaiah's God, other gods, and no God constitute three options that are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. Necessarily, exactly one of these three options is true. Consequently, the argument for prophecy defends biblical theism against all competitors. There is profound and enduring wisdom in the apostolic choice of powerful principal arguments for the truth of the gospel.

⁷ Kenny Barfield, *The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of the Biblical Prophets* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1995), 193–224.

III. ADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE

Four strict criteria must be met for admissible prophecy evidence used in a public project that is equally and fully fair to proponents of both controversial hypotheses, H_R and H_L . These criteria are clear prediction, documented outcome, proper chronology, and evidential weight. First, the prediction must be available publicly with a reliable text and evident interpretation, and the prediction must be so clear and detailed that either a fulfillment or a failure is recognizable without ambiguity. Second, the prophecy must already have had a physical outcome that is well documented by public facts from items found in archaeological sites and museums, independent and reliable historical records, evident facts of world history, or other satisfactory evidence. Third, the chronology must be right, with public and definitive evidence proving that the prophecy predates its outcome. And fourth, the predictions must be so specific and unusual that the chance of fulfillment merely by luck is small, and these chances or probabilities must be determined at least approximately. These criteria are necessary and sufficient for a public project on Bible prophecy. They give neither H_R nor H_L any advantage or disadvantage, but rather they assure a disciplined and worthwhile inquiry to the benefit of all comers. Competent research using admissible prophecies that meet strict criteria for public evidence provides robust results that can withstand scrutiny.⁸

Admissible prophecy evidence is *objective* evidence in the obvious sense that it is about physical objects—texts and artifacts and such—that originated centuries or even millennia ago, long before any of us were born, let alone thought about Bible prophecies. Secondly, it is also *public* evidence because ordinary human endowments enable any interested persons to read texts and inspect objects. And thirdly, prophecy evidence is *efficient* evidence because a quite manageable amount of effort and evidence suffices for decisive results, as shown in the following two sections.

IV. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The amount of luck involved in successful Bible prophecies according to H_L has been expressed in various ways. A common way is the probability P of a successful prediction merely by luck. Another common way, which is the language used here, is 1 chance in X of lucky success, where X is the reciprocal of P (and P is the reciprocal of X). For example, a prophecy with 1 chance in 10 of lucky suc-

⁸ For example, see the exchange between prophecy proponent Robert Newman and prophecy opponent Evan Fales in Newman's 1997 chapter, Fales's 2001 critique, and Newman's 2001 and 2002 responses. Robert C. Newman, "Fulfilled Prophecy as Miracle," in *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History*, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 214–25; Evan Fales, "Successful Defense? A Review of *In Defense of Miracles*," *Philosophia Christi* 3.1 (2001): 22–25 ("Robert C. Newman: Fulfilled Prophecy as Miracle"); Robert C. Newman, "On Fulfilled Prophecy as Miracle," *Philosophia Christi* 3.1 (2001): 63–67; Hugh G. Gauch Jr., John A. Bloom, and Robert C. Newman, "Public Theology and Scientific Method: Formulating Reasons that Count across Worldviews," *Philosophia Christi* 4.1 (2002): 77–78.

cess (or equivalently probability 0.1) is ambitious and risky enough that on average 10 such prophecies would include 1 lucky success and 9 failures.⁹

However, individual trials have a distribution around their average. For instance, consider rolling a fair die until success with getting a 6. On average, this task would take 6 rolls. But with good luck, it could require as few as 1 roll; whereas with bad luck, it could require an indefinitely large number of rolls, even 50 or more rolls. Naturally, outcomes far from the average are rare. This distribution of the number of attempts until and including the first success is called the negative binomial distribution.

The traditional statistical analysis of fulfilled Bible prophecies, which has pervaded the prophecy literature for decades, uses elementary probability theory. The chance of several prophecies all coming true by luck equals their individual chances (or probabilities) multiplied together, assuming that the prophecies concern independent events. For example, three independent prophecies with chances of 1 in 10, 1 in 50, and 1 in 1,000 yield a combined chance of 1 in 500,000 for all prophecies coming true merely by luck. In other words, this evidence favors revelation H_R over luck H_L by a factor of 500,000.

The traditional analysis accounts only for luck, but not bias. However, advocates of H_L might worry that prophecy enthusiasts selected only those prophecies that happened to be fulfilled, regardless of whether that bias was intentional or not. In principle an option exists to avoid bias, namely the investigation of all admissible prophecies rather than only some, but that ambitious project has not yet been undertaken. Consequently, a public inquiry that treats proponents of both H_R and H_L fairly cannot ignore the potential objection of bias in the selection of prophecies included in a given sample. Not until 2014 was the required statistical analysis developed.¹⁰ This analysis also requires independent events in order to avoid overestimating the strength of the prophecy evidence.

The statistics problem to be solved can be stated concisely. *Given:* The chance of fulfillment merely by luck for each of the prophecies in a sample of N admissible prophecies, and the total number of all admissible prophecies T . *Required:* The chance that all prophecies in the sample are fulfilled, calculated in a manner that accounts for even the worst possible bias in selecting the N samples from the total number of all admissible prophecies T , namely the total T is comprised of the N reported fulfilled prophecies and the remaining $T-N$ are all failed prophecies. The worst possible scenario is chosen here because it precludes objections that prophecy opponents might otherwise raise about any milder scenario, and it leads to a tidy statistical analysis.

The 2014 article that introduced the statistical analysis of bias estimated the number of admissible Bible *verses* involving prophecies and gave an estimate of 500.

⁹ The language of odds has also been used in the prophecy literature, but it is not used in this article. Odds of 1: X equate to a probability of $1/(1+X)$. For example, odds of 1:10 equate to a probability of approximately 0.0909, or to 1 chance in 11 of lucky success.

¹⁰ Hugh G. Gauch Jr., "Best Practices for Prophecy Arguments," *Philosophia Christi* 16.2 (2014): 255–82.

However, the number T that is required in the problem statement is a different number, namely the number of admissible Bible *prophecies*. The present article refines the statistical analysis of prophecy data by estimating the relevant quantity.

An estimate of T can be obtained by first determining an easier quantity, the number of all Bible prophecies, and by then estimating the fraction of them that are admissible. A comprehensive and magisterial study organized Bible prophecies under 18 topics, accounted for duplicates in different Bible passages, and reported a total of 737 prophecies.¹¹ But few meet all four of the strict criteria required for admissible evidence in a public study of prophecies. For example, 127 prophecies concern still-future events, so they are not yet available for validation. Our examination of these 737 prophecies found 133 that are admissible, and we have rounded this estimate to 150 admissible prophecies.

A simple intuition underlies the statistical analysis of bias: For a given prophecy data set, if the expected number of failed prophecies according to H_L is much larger than the actual number of admissible prophecies T , then H_L has made an unrealistic prediction, so its credibility is diminished. For example, if H_L were true, then $N = 3$ successful prophecies with chances of 1 in 10, 50, and 1,000 of coming true merely by luck would be accompanied on average by $9 + 49 + 999 = 1,057$ failed prophecies. But this expectation of $3 + 1,057 = 1,060$ prophecies is much larger than the limit of $T = 150$ prophecies, so hypothesis H_L is in trouble. But how much trouble? To progress from a simple intuition to an exact probability requires the statistical analysis and computer simulation that solve the above problem statement using negative binomial distributions, as was explained in detail in the 2014 article already cited. For this example, the answer from simulation is only 1 chance in 11 of explaining away these 3 successes by luck and bias.

Statistical analysis of both luck and bias for the 12 independent prophecies in the 2014 article, which used the overly large estimate of $T = 500$, favors revelation H_R over luck H_L by a factor of 52. For comparison, the traditional analysis accounts for luck but not bias, and its simple multiplication together of the individual chances for each prophecy favors H_R over H_L by a factor of 7.5×10^{17} . Understandably, scholars who have encountered only this single example of the new analysis of bias may get the impression that bias is extremely powerful for deflating the exaggerated claims from the traditional analysis. However, these 12 prophecies with the refined $T = 150$ increase the factor in favor of H_R to 16,000, which is much stronger than 52, so this refinement is helpful.

V. PROPHECY DATA SETS

The initial results presented here are obtained by reanalysis of prophecy data presented in our 2003 article in this journal and data presented in a 2013 article by

¹¹ J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillments* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 631–59.

Lydia McGrew in *Philosophia Christi*.¹² The first of these articles used the same criteria for admissible evidence as are specified here, and it documented 4 prophecies about Israel with 1 chance in 2, 10, 10, and 1,000 of success by luck; 9 prophecies about surrounding nations with 1 chance in 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 10, 10, 10, and 30; and 3 prophecies about the Messiah with 1 chance in 10, 60, and 200. The later article used similar criteria of admissibility, had no duplications of the prophecies in the first article, and documented 5 prophecies about the Messiah's death with 1 chance in 5, 5, 20, 50, and 1,000 of success by luck. Thus, this initial prophecy data set contains 21 prophecies. The statistical analysis that accounts for concerns about bias and uses $T = 150$ favors H_R by a factor of 580,000. These 21 prophecies all concern quite different matters, so an assumption of independent events is warranted. To achieve still stronger results, this section documents an additional prophecy concerning Jesus's birthplace. This birth is wholly unrelated to all the other 21 prophecies, so it is also an independent event.

Jesus's birth in Bethlehem, celebrated annually at Christmas, involves one of the most familiar Bible prophecies. Writing several centuries before Jesus, Micah prophesied, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times" (Mic 5:2 [NIV], which is quoted in Matt 2:6). This prophecy was well known to the Jews, as well as to a worried King Herod, who subsequently ordered the massacre of all boys two years old and younger in Bethlehem and vicinity in order to preclude competition from a rival king (Matt 2:1–18).

Micah's words stand as a text that has been established reliably in its Hebrew original and in Greek translation since more than a century before Christ, and continually thereafter until now. And whatever doubts a skeptic might bring to the Bible's accounts of the resurrection and other miracles, the report of a birth at Bethlehem is commended by the superb historical accuracy of the Gospel authors on other matters that can be verified directly. Furthermore, if this were a fabricated birth story by both Matthew and Luke, then it would be exceedingly difficult to explain why they took the unnecessary risks of bringing in persons and events such as Herod, Augustus, Quirinius, the magi, the shepherds, a census, and a massacre that many of the early readers of the Gospels would have known about and challenged. If fabricated, a more private story would have been far safer from refutation. Douglas Scott argued that Jesus of Nazareth is the predicted Messiah using a historical-evidential approach that reviews scholarly opinions and supports so-called minimal facts.¹³ Historical evidence supports Jesus's fulfillment of the

¹² Newman, Bloom, and Gauch, "Public Theology and Prophecy Data"; Lydia McGrew, "Probabilistic Issues concerning Jesus of Nazareth and Messianic Death Prophecies," *Philosophia Christi* 15.2 (2013): 311–28.

¹³ Douglas D. Scott, *Is Jesus of Nazareth the Predicted Messiah? A Historical-Evidential Approach to Specific Old Testament Messianic Prophecies and Their New Testament Fulfillments* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018).

prophecy about the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem.¹⁴ But Scott's analysis did not assign a probability, so we add that component.

What is the antecedent probability that Jesus, a first-century Jew, would be born in Bethlehem? The population of Bethlehem was about 650 persons.¹⁵ And the number of Jews in Palestine was about 2,500,000.¹⁶ Thus the antecedent probability of Jesus being born in Bethlehem is about 1 chance in 2,500,000/650 or 3,800.

Recall that statistical analysis of the initial 21 prophecies favors H_R over H_L by a factor of 580,000. Addition of this prophecy about Bethlehem greatly increases the strength of the evidence to a factor of 200,000,000. Consequently, appropriate statistical analysis of a manageable amount of prophecy evidence can dispel concerns about both luck and bias. Luck and bias are not infinite resources for dismissing the case for fulfilled Bible prophecy, but rather their limits are quantified by statistical analysis.

VI. DISCUSSION

Where is the action in the case for fulfilled Bible prophecy—and equally importantly, where is there absolutely no action whatsoever? There is no action—no advantage or disadvantage for either H_R or H_L —in the criteria for admissible evidence. And there is no action in the statistical analysis, which is impartial toward the competing hypotheses. Instead, all the action resides in readily available information about ancient parchments, archaeological findings, and evident facts of world history that does bear on the credibility of H_R and H_L . The action is in an observable physical reality shared by all persons living on this one earth.

An immediate implication of a successful case for fulfilled Bible prophecy is that “God exists,” and hence atheism is false. Because revealing entails existing, “God reveals” entails that “God exists.” Furthermore, this entailment means that there is no need for a previous and independent proof that “God exists” before mounting an argument for “God reveals,” as exemplified by the present stand-alone defense of the hypothesis H_R of revelation from God to the prophets.¹⁷

Because fulfilled prophecy is a kind of miracle, a successful case entails that “Miracles occur.” Besides prophecy, there is also strong evidence for both biblical and contemporary miracles.¹⁸ The cases for these three kinds of miracles are syner-

¹⁴ Scott, *Is Jesus of Nazareth the Predicted Messiah?*, vi, 126–42, 133–35.

¹⁵ Estimates of the population of Bethlehem in the time of Christ range from 300 to 1,000, so the average of 650 is adopted here. Richard T. France, “Herod and the Children of Bethlehem,” *NovT* 21.2 (1979): 114.

¹⁶ The census of Emperor Claudius in AD 48 reported 6,944,000 Jews within the empire, which with others in Babylonia, Yemen, Ethiopia, and elsewhere implies that “shortly before the fall of Jerusalem the world Jewish population exceeded 8,000,000 of whom probably not more than 2,350,000 – 2,500,000 lived in Palestine.” Salo W. Baron, “Population,” *EncJud* 16:385.

¹⁷ Sandra Menssen and Thomas D. Sullivan, “The Existence of God and the Existence of Homer: Rethinking Theism and Revelatory Claims,” *Faith and Philosophy* 19.3 (2002): 331–47.

¹⁸ Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). This scholarly 1,200-page work has a more concise and popularized parallel: Eric Metaxas, *Miracles: What They Are, Why They Happen, and How They Can Change Your Life* (New York: Dutton, 2014).

gistic, resulting in a resplendent overall case for miracles. However, among these three, prophecy has a unique advantage. Bible prophecy evidence is physical and public, available here and now for any interested persons to examine—unlike Moses’s burning bush or Jesus’s miraculous wine. As Blaise Pascal observed, “Fulfilled prophecies constitute a lasting miracle.”¹⁹

Belief or disbelief in miracles is not an isolated idea, but rather interacts and correlates with other beliefs, particularly beliefs about God’s existence and Scripture’s authority. The writers of the Gospels obviously expected their miracle accounts to increase the credibility of their claims, especially about who Jesus is. But readers who come to the Gospels with a settled conviction that miracles are impossible can have the opposite reaction: Miracle accounts prove only that the Gospel writers were primitive, superstitious, gullible, prescientific people. Consequently, only by recognizing that beliefs come in networks of interacting beliefs can one fully appreciate the strategic value of a strong case for miracles, including the lasting miracle of fulfilled Bible prophecy.²⁰ The apostolic argument for fulfilled prophecy, with suitable adaptation for contemporary audiences, establishes the reality of God and miracles, and thereby enlivens a proper reaction to the Bible’s miracle accounts and enduring authority.

Many think that science has public evidence whereas religion has personal faith—or that science and religion are in conflict. The perceived problem is not merely that religion has too little evidence, but rather that it totally lacks the right kind of evidence, namely empirical evidence that counts in public. These critiques may well apply to some or even many religions, but they do not apply to Christianity. Indeed, prophecy arguments alone suffice to prove that Christianity does offer strong, empirical, and public evidence, which is available here and now. Consequently, persons who already enjoy putting empirical evidence to work in order to find the truth in science (and history and daily life) also have an open opportunity to put empirical evidence to work in order to find the truth about life’s big questions, including whether God exists and miracles occur.²¹ The full release of empirical evidence, rather than half measures, confers great benefits.

Recall that the Bible has 127 prophecies that concern still-future events, such as the second coming of Christ and the eternal destiny of humans. This article ignores these prophecies because they are not admissible for the present purpose of testing hypotheses H_R and H_L . However, the Bible’s miraculous accuracy for admissible prophecies that have already been fulfilled provides good reason to take seriously its additional prophecies about the future. Indeed, if humans do have an eternal destiny beyond death, then this is worth knowing about, especially on the sure foundation of genuine revelation from God, who is the All-Knowing Knower.

¹⁹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. and trans. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2005), 54.

²⁰ Furthermore, beliefs influence actions. Larry Barnett, “The Need for Apologetics: What the Data Reveal about the Crisis of Faith among Young Christians in America,” *Philosophia Christi* 17.2 (2015): 473–87.

²¹ Hugh G. Gauch Jr., *Scientific Method in Brief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 100–5.

The argument for fulfilled Bible prophecy has extravagant significance. J. Barton Payne emphasized that God's foremost purpose for giving prophecy is holiness: Understanding God's covenantal promises and future plans gives persons a dignity and hope that stimulates growth in holiness.²² In the prophetic vision of the biblical worldview, the present phase of human history—with Christianity and other worldviews being highly controversial—is atypical and transitory. The certain destiny of every person, including all who live in the past or present or future, is to know by direct experience and for all eternity that “the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

VII. CONCLUSION

God offers successful prophecies as evidence that people can use to know that he alone is the true and living God, particularly people who instead believe in false gods (Isa 44:6–8). In order to help his disciples keep their faith through the impending ominous events of his death, Christ said, “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it happens, you will believe that I am who I am” (John 13:19). Also, the resurrected Christ said that everything must be fulfilled that is prophesied about him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms: primarily, that the Messiah will suffer and then rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, starting at Jerusalem (Luke 24:25–27, 44–49). Furthermore, “the *apologia* was not the invention of the apostles; they had all ‘received’ it—received it from the Lord.”²³ That is, the apostles received the argument from prophecy from Christ, who is God incarnate. An argument voiced by God himself, for the benefit of both nonbelievers and believers, should be commended by Christian scholars.²⁴

²² Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, 6–8, 14–5.

²³ Bruce, *Apostolic Defence*, 16. In support of this claim, Bruce cited Luke 24:26–27 and Acts 26:22–23.

²⁴ The authors acknowledge and appreciate helpful feedback from three anonymous peer reviewers.