

Prophecy And Secularly Accepted Events Of Jesus' Life

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Many scholars do not accept the Gospels as historically accurate accounts of Jesus' life. Instead, they see these accounts of Jesus as stories that combine true history with myth. For instance, the genealogies of Jesus that report David as an ancestor (Matthew 1 and Luke 3) of Jesus would be considered fictitious genealogies invented by first-century Christians to make Jesus fit one prophecy of the Messiah. Likewise, any attributions of Jesus as a substitute sacrifice for our sins in the New Testament were invented by Christians to make Jesus the Man predicted in Isaiah 53.

Nonetheless, there are some events of Jesus' life seen in the gospels that most, if not all, scholars are willing to accept. I have taken a selection of some of the leading Jesus scholars who do not wholly accept the gospel accounts and matched the events they agree on with prophecies of the Old Testament. The scholars are Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg, Bart Ehrman, John Meier, and Burton Mack.

1) A messenger to precede Him, specifically John the Baptist. John the Baptist's existence is accepted by John Meier (pg 19), Dominic Crossan (pg 45), Jesus Seminar (pg 40), Bart Ehrman (pg 58), Burton Mack (pg 153), and Marcus Borg (pg 77).

He is foretold in Malachi 3:1a "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple" (NRSV).

His existence is seen in Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3. Jesus talks about him in Luke 7:27 when He says "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you" (NASB).

Another prophecy of him is seen in Malachi 4:5 "Lo, I will send out the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (NRSV). Jesus remarks about him in Matthew 11:13-4 "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah who was to come" (NASB, prophecy in Criswell, 1318-9 and Hagee, 1605).

2) Jesus' Galilean ministry. This is accepted by John Meier (pg 1051), Dominic Crossan (pg 198), Jesus Seminar (pg 7), Bart Ehrman (pg 58), Burton Mack (pg 63), and Marcus Borg (pg 183).

This is foretold in Isaiah 9:1b-2 "In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness--on them a great light has shined" (NRSV).

The prophecy was fulfilled in Matthew 4:13-6 "and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles...'" (NASB, prophecy from Criswell, 1319 and Hagee, 1605).

3) His execution as a criminal. This is accepted by John Meier (pg 19), Dominic Crossan (pg 145), Jesus Seminar (pg 7), Bart Ehrman (pgs 228-31), Burton Mack (pg 139), and Marcus Borg (pg 105).

This was foretold in Isaiah 53:12 "...he poured out himself to death, and was numbered among the transgressors..." (NRSV).

This was fulfilled in Mark 15:27 "And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left" (NASB, prophecy from Criswell, 1321 and Hagee, 1607).

4) His teaching by parables. This is accepted by John Meier (pg 146), Dominic Crossan (pg 198), Jesus Seminar (pg 323), Bart Ehrman (pg 192), and Marcus Borg (pg 147). Burton Mack does not seem to say anything either way. He speaks of a simple "sayings gospel" that was used by Jesus' earliest followers (pg 3) and gives a translation of this "sayings gospel" which includes parables (pgs 73-80).

Jesus' parables are predicted in Psalm 78:2a "I will open my mouth in a parable" (NRSV).

This was fulfilled throughout the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. One specific passage mentions the prophecy fulfillment, Matthew 13:34-35 "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable, so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying 'I will open My mouth in parables'" (NASB prophecy from Criswell, 1319 and Hagee, 1605).

These four things demonstrate to us that Jesus filled at least four criteria for the prophecies of the Messiah. Even if Jesus deliberately intended to speak in parables to fulfill the prophecy, the prophecy that He would speak in parables is still fulfilled. The same is true if he arranged His own execution. Jesus probably could not have arranged to have had John the Baptist show up immediately before His ministry. Jesus probably could not have arranged growing up in Galilee.

If these four prophecies came true about the same man, it is certainly easy to believe that some others came true, such as a birth in Bethlehem and an ancestry that includes David, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. It is also easier to believe that He was that Atoning, Vicarious Sacrifice for our sins in Isaiah 53 as fulfilled in Mark 10:45, II Corinthians 5:21, I Peter 2:24, and others. We should be thankful to the God Who gives us evidence that:

- 1) He spoke His word through the prophets of the Old Testament.
- 2) He wants us to accept Jesus' death on the cross as the substitute for the Hell we deserve for our sins.

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