

“The Case for Christ: The Fingerprint Evidence”

Date: May 27, 2018 **Place:** Lakewood UMC **Occasion:** Case for Christ series
Theme: apologetics, fulfillment of Scripture, prophesy
Texts: 2 Corinthians 13:11-14; Isaiah 53:3-9, 12

On September 19, 1910, Clarence Hiller was murdered in his own home, in Chicago. Police arrested Thomas Jennings, a known burglar, less than a mile away. The evidence that eventually convicted him of the murder, by placing him at the scene of the crime, was a fingerprint found on the freshly-painted window he had used to break into the house.

It was the *first* time that fingerprint evidence had been used in a court of law in the United States. It is now a common tool in the toolbox of law enforcement. The premise behind fingerprint evidence is simple:

Each individual has unique ridges on his or her fingers. When a print found on an object matches the pattern of ridges on a person’s finger, investigators can conclude with scientific certainty that this specific individual has touched that object. In many criminal cases, fingerprint identification is the pivotal evidence.

But what has this got to do with Jesus Christ? Simply this: There is another kind of evidence that is analogous to fingerprints, and it establishes to an astounding degree of certainty that *Jesus is indeed* the Messiah of Israel and of the world.

In the Jewish Scriptures, which we as Christians call the Old Testament, there are several dozen major prophecies about the coming Messiah, who would be sent by God to redeem his people. In effect, these predictions formed a figurative fingerprint that *only* the Anointed One would be able to match. But was Jesus really the Christ, the Messiah of the Old Testament?

There are literally dozens of scripture passages that point to Jesus being the Messiah. Isaiah 7:14, written 700 years before Jesus, said he would be born of a virgin. Micah 5:2, written 700 years before Jesus, said he would be born in Bethlehem. Multiple passages foretold he would be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. Genesis 49:10 tells us he would come from the tribe of Judah.

Psalm 22 prophesied that the Messiah would be mocked and scorned, whipped and killed by the piercing of his hands and feet. Now notice this. Roman crucifixions had not even been invented when this was written, some 300 to 1,000 years before Jesus. Psalm 22 also prophesied that his bones would be out of joint, and his garments would be divided by the casting of lots or dice.

Psalm 29:18 said he would heal the deaf and the blind. Psalm 78:2 told us that he would teach with parables. Psalm 2:2 prophesied that kings and rulers would plot to kill him. Psalm 41:9 foretold that he would be betrayed by a close friend.

Get this – Zechariah 11:12 told in advance that he would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah 13:7 foretold that his disciples would be scattered. Isaiah 53:9 that he would be buried in a rich man's grave. Psalm 16:10 and Hosea 6:2 foretold that he would be resurrected on the third day.

There are at least 48 Old Testament scriptures that refer to the Messiah. A college professor of mathematics and science, by the name of Dr. Peter Stoner, wanted to determine what the odds were than any human being, throughout all of human history, could fulfill all 48 messianic prophecies. They crunched the numbers, and this is what they found:

The odds of any human being fulfilling 48 of these ancient prophecies would be one chance in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion (13 times) So what can we conclude? It would be mathematically impossible for anyone else ever to fulfill all of the parameters of prophecy in the Old Testament any better than Jesus did. All of the evidence points to Jesus as the divinely appointed fulfillment of the messianic prophecies. He was God's man, confirmed by God's signs." – Scholar Norman Geisler

If we go back and re-read the 2nd lesson today, from Isaiah 53, it is as though Isaiah, written hundreds of years before Jesus is born, was taking Jesus' fingerprints. Prophecy-scholar Michael L. Brown says this:

"In Isaiah 53 it's almost as if God said, "I want to make it so absolutely clear Jesus is the Messiah that it's undeniable. I almost feel as if God would have to apologize to the human race and to the Jewish people for putting this passage into the Scriptures when it so clearly points to Jesus, if he didn't mean it." – Michael, L. Brown

Lee Strobel came at this as an atheist and a sceptic. He was not so easily convinced, and so he asked his expert, Bible scholar Louis Lapidés, "Couldn't Jesus intentionally have tried to fulfill Scripture on his own?" Here's how the professor answered that:

"For a few of the prophecies, yes, that's certainly conceivable that Jesus could have intentionally fulfilled them, as some claim. But there are many others for which this just wouldn't have been possible. For instance, how could he control the fact that the Sanhedrin offered Judas 30 pieces of silver to betray him?

How could he have arranged his own ancestry, or to be born when and where he was? How could he have arranged his method of execution, or that the soldiers gambled for his clothing, or that his legs remained

unbroken on the cross? How would he arrange to perform miracles in front of skeptics? How would he arrange for his resurrection?”

The professor goes on: “When you interpret Daniel 9:24-26, it foretells that the Messiah would appear after a certain length of time after King Artaxerxes issued a decree for the Jewish people to go from Persia to rebuild the walls in Jerusalem. That puts the anticipated appearance of the Messiah at the exact moment in history when Jesus showed up. Certainly, that’s nothing he could have prearranged.”

Strobel conceded the point to the professor, but followed it up with another possible explanation for how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. He asked, “Isn’t it possible the Gospel writers fabricated details to make it appear that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies?”

The professor smiled and gently answered his question. “When the gospels were being circulated, there were people living who had been around when these things happened. Someone would have said to Matthew, “You know it didn’t happen that way. We’re trying to communicate a life of righteousness and truth, so don’t taint it with a lie.”

“What’s more, the Jewish community would have jumped on any opportunity to discredit the gospels by pointing out falsehoods. They would have called the Christians on their falsehood if it didn’t happen that way.”

When you look at these 48 prophecies and realize that it is almost astronomically impossible for anyone else to have fulfilled them, we can say with certainty, that the fingerprints belong to Jesus. Listen to what Jesus himself says: “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” (Luke 24:44)

I am 100% convinced the fingerprints belong to Jesus. How convinced are you that Jesus, and Jesus alone, fulfills the Old Testament

prophesies for the Messiah? Are you ready yet to make that leap of faith, and proclaim that Jesus really is who he says he is: the son of God?

Let us pray:

God, we thank you for the Holy Scriptures. We thank you for both the Old Testament and the New Testament, for together they foretell the coming of Jesus and how he fulfilled the ancient Jewish prophecies. Lord, your Word convinces us that Jesus is who claimed to be, the Son of God, the Living Lord, the Messiah, the Anointed One of Israel and the world.

Lord, if there is anyone here today who has not claimed Jesus as their Lord and their Savior, we ask that your Holy Spirit minister to them. Help them to examine the evidence and decide for themselves. We pray that they will come to faith, and choose to follow Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, our Lord and our Savior. In His mighty name we pray. Amen.

This sermon borrows heavily from the book *The Case for Christ*, by Lee Strobel, Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 1998, 2016; pp. 253-276; and the study guide by the same name and author, pp. 49-64.