

Case for Christ

for Kids

- Lee Strobel



Chapter 3

**MESSIAH: DID  
JESUS FIT THE  
PICTURE?**

The Jews expected a great hero called the Messiah to save them one day. The Old Testament had a lot to say about what the Messiah might be like, which gives us a chance to see how Jesus stacked up to that job description. If he fit all the qualifications that the Jews had set out for the Messiah long before he was born, that would be even more evidence in Jesus' favor.



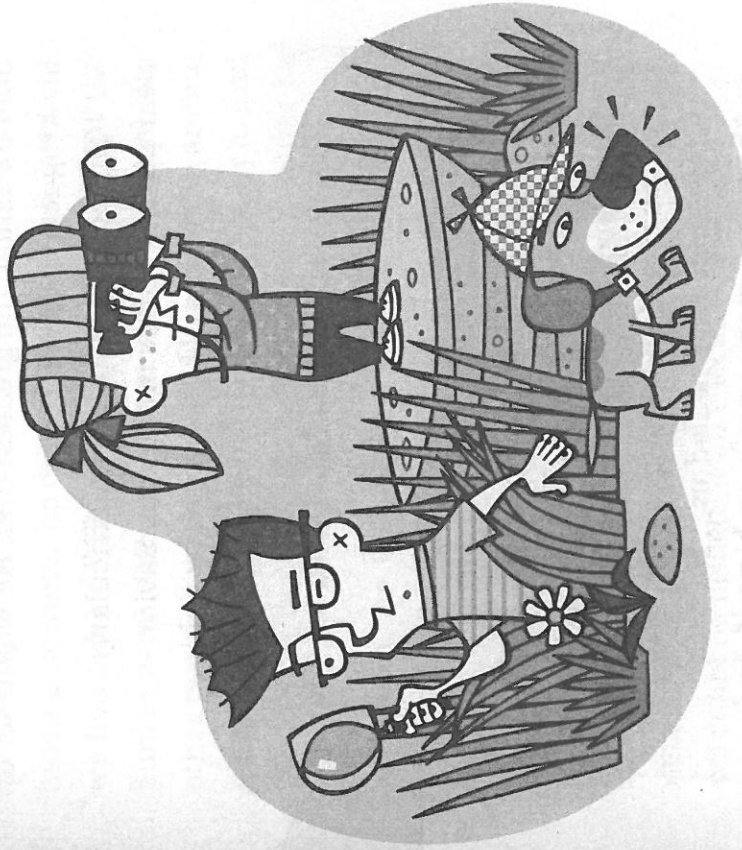
### Messiah: Ancient Superhero?

The Jews' people, believed that God would send a special person to rescue everyone. Throughout the Old Testament of the Bible, you will find many clues and hints about this hero who would come. The Jews were very eager to meet their Messiah, but they were not sure when to expect him. Jesus claimed he was that special Savior.



**Question:** If a great new hero arrived in today's world, what do you think he would be like? What kinds of things would he spend his time on?

You will find references to the Messiah all through the Old Testament, usually in the books of the prophets — people who preached about God and sometimes told what God had in store for the future. Finding the Messiah in the Old Testament is like an Easter egg hunt. There's a clue hidden here, another one there, and yet another detail hidden somewhere else.



It takes a good while to make the full “hunt” and get the whole picture. But there were certain details about this coming deliverer that many Jewish people knew. It was known that he would be born in Bethlehem. He would be descended from David. He would bring a brand new kingdom for Israel, the greatest ever. He would set up his kingdom to last forever.

The box below offers a particularly clear picture of this mysterious Savior.



**The Messiah will be faced with these challenges:**

**Men looked down on him. They didn't accept him. He knew all about sorrow and suffering... But the servant was pierced because we had sinned... He was punished to make us whole again. His wounds have healed us... He took the sins of many people on himself. And he gave his life for those who had done what is wrong.**

(Isaiah 53:3, 5, 12)

Sound familiar? Yes, it would be hard to come up with a better word picture of the Jesus you know from the New Testament. According to Isaiah, a prophet who lived hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the Messiah would be unpopular with many people and would suffer greatly. Though not doing anything wrong or hurting anyone, he would be “pierced because we had sinned.” That means he would accept the punishment (through some sharp weapon) for other people’s wrongdoings. He would die among wicked people but be buried among the rich. And because of his wounds, our own hurts would be healed.

From the Gospels, we know that Jesus was indeed unpopular among the religious leaders at the time he was killed. Crowds yelled for his execution. We know he suffered, and that he was pierced with nails and crucified (this punishment was not used in Isaiah’s time). He never did anything wrong, never hurt anyone, but died for our wrongs so that we could be healed. It all checks out!

You might think, “That’s cool, but it couldn’t have been written *before* Jesus lived.” As a matter of fact, it was. Seven hundred years before Jesus, to be exact! It is impossible that it could have been faked, because we know that those precise

words of Isaiah (and the other prophets too) have been there all along, and never changed.



**Question:** The way you see it, which prediction about the Messiah fits Jesus best? How come?

## FIVE DOZEN REASONS

All in all, there are about sixty important predictions about Jesus in the Old Testament. Remember, the prophets were giving details of someone who would not be born for hundreds of years!

Okay, so how about this for an explanation? Jesus knew all those Scriptures. Could it be that he used the predictions as a kind of road map, and went along with following their demands?

The only problem is that there were many prophecy fulfillments he *couldn't* arrange — such as being born in the town of Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 nailed that one. He couldn't arrange to be betrayed for a specific amount of money (Zechariah

11:12–13), or for men to gamble to see who got to keep his clothing (Psalm 22:18).

Well, what about coincidence? Why couldn't there have been several people who fulfilled those prophecies? Jesus might have just been the one who got all the credit. But a science professor named Dr. Peter Stoner says that's highly unlikely. He and six hundred students wanted to find out the likelihood of someone fulfilling so many prophecies. They came up with very reasonable estimates and used a lot of complicated math equations (you don't want to know!) to figure out that the chances of any one person fulfilling just *eight* of the prophecies was one in a hundred million billion.

Maybe all those figures are wrong. You do the math (or not). Think about this example alone. David wrote, “A group of sinful people has closed in on me. They are all around me like a pack of dogs. They have pierced my hands and feet... They laugh when I suffer. They divide up my clothes among them. They cast lots for what I am wearing”

**COINCIDENCE:** events that happen at the same time accidentally but seem to have a connection

(Psalm 22:16–18). David, who lived long before the Romans and their practice of crucifixion, was writing the thoughts of his own descendant, about one thousand years before that descendant (Jesus) would be born! It seems like too much to be a simple coincidence, doesn't it?

### Fitting the Big Picture

	Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament Fulfillment
Birthplace	Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)	Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1)
Family	David's line (Jeremiah 23:5–6)	David's line (Matthew 1)
Blood Money	30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12–13)	30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15)
Gambling for Clothing	Cast lots for clothing (Psalm 22:18)	Cast lots for clothing (Matthew 27:35)

## WHAT ARE THE ODDS?

Jesus knew the importance of all those ancient predictions. He said, "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must come true" (Luke 24:44). He was certainly aware that he was fulfilling the predictions, but could he have arranged for so many to fit? And if so, why would he do it, knowing his reward would be a cross on a hill?

When Jesus was arrested, he was in a garden praying that there might be some way for him not to face such an awful death. "My soul is very sad. I feel close to death," he said to his friends who were also in the garden. Then he prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. But let what you want be done, not what I want" (Matthew 26:38–39). He was not eager to suffer, but would do exactly what his Father wanted him to do.



## So what do you think?

Do these sound like the words and actions of a crazy person? A faker? What's your take?



**Question:** So we've looked at what Jesus said and what he did. What did you find most surprising in this section? What did you find most interesting? Why?

If we can trust the Bible, the picture it presents of Jesus is fascinating. If the Gospels are true, there has never been anyone in the world like Jesus. But those are big ifs. The Bible could be a collection of fairy tales. It could be a bunch of de-liberate lies. It could be a mistake. Couldn't it?

