

4.

Prophetic Witness

Centuries before Jesus, Israel's Scriptures foretold a pierced, killed, and later vindicated Messiah:

Psalm 22 (c. 1010–970 BC)

"I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind. Everyone who sees me mocks me: 'He relies on the LORD; let him save him!' I am poured out like water, all my bones disjoined; they pierced my hands and feet.

Praise Him! He has not despised the torment of the oppressed but listened when he cried for help. All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD. All who go down to the dust will kneel before him."

Isaiah 52 & 53 (c. 540–530 BC)

"See, my servant will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering. He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our iniquities; we are healed by his wounds. He was oppressed but did not open his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter. He was with a rich man at his death.

After his anguish, he will see light and be satisfied. My righteous servant will justify many, and he will carry their iniquities. Therefore I will give him the many as a portion, and he will receive the mighty as spoil, because he willingly submitted to death."

Zechariah 12-14 (c. 518 BC–480 BC)

"When they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child. The LORD of hosts declares, 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me.'

On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. The living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem. & the LORD will be king over all the earth."

Wisdom 2 & 3 (c. 50 BC–10 AD)

"They reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, 'Let us lie in wait for the righteous man. He calls himself a child of the Lord. Let us see if his words are true and test what will happen at the end of his life. Let us condemn him to a shameful death. If he is God's child, he will deliver him.'

Though in the eyes of the foolish their departure was taken for misery, they are at peace. Their hope is full of immortality. They will shine forth and govern nations."

5.

Daniel's Seventy Weeks

In 539 BC the prophet Daniel foretold the timetable for the Messiah's anointing & sacrificial death (Dan 9:24–27) – fulfilled **to the very year** 565 years later in Jesus:

The Starting Point:

Daniel said that the countdown would begin "from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem..." (Daniel 9:25). This decree was made in **457 BC** by the Persian king Artaxerxes (see Ezra 7:11–26), allowing the Jewish people to return and rebuild their city and temple.

The 69 Weeks (483 Years) Until the Messiah

Daniel here prophesied that the Messiah ("anointed one") would appear **69 weeks** after that decree, saying, "Until The Anointed One– the Prince, there will be **7 and 62 weeks**." (Daniel 9:25). Using the biblical pattern of "**a day for each year**", (Ezekiel 4:6), with a day representing a year, **69 weeks = 483 years. 483 years after 457 BC = AD 26:** the year "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." (Acts 10:38) at His baptism (Luke 3:21–22).

The Messiah Cut Off in the Final Week (AD 30)

Daniel then predicted that after this "the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing." (Daniel 9:26); "**In the middle of the week**, He will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering." (Daniel 9:27). **3½ years after His anointing** is precisely when Jesus died on the cross **c. AD 30**, fulfilling Daniel's prophecy and ending the temple sacrificial system by becoming the ultimate sacrifice for sins. (Hebrews 10:10–14).

The Destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70)

Daniel also foretold that after the Messiah's death, "the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary." (Daniel 9:26). This was fulfilled in **AD 70**, when the Romans, led by Prince Titus, overran Jerusalem and demolished the temple, just as Jesus had warned that **during the final week**— for His words would unfold "in this generation" (Matthew 24:34)— that "they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:43–44).

Convincing Proofs: Jesus Christ According To Prophecy & History



"The Lord himself will give you a sign"

The Prophets and Witnesses Speak.

1.

Non-Christian Testimony

Greco-Roman and Jewish writers outside the Bible confirm Jesus' historical life, reputation, & crucifixion:

Mara Bar Serapion, Syrian Philosopher, c. 70 AD

"What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise king? The Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion; The wise king lived on in the teaching which he had given."

Josephus, Jewish Historian, c. 93 AD

"At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. His conduct was good, and he was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and the other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. But those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he was alive, and had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion."

Tacitus, Roman Historian, c. 100 AD

"Christus suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome."

Suetonius, Roman Historian, c. 121 AD

"Because the Jews at Rome caused constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (Christ), Claudius expelled them from the city."*

*Compare to Acts 18:2.

Lucian of Samosata, Greek Author, c. 170 AD

"The Christians worship as a god a man who was crucified in Palestine for introducing novel rites."

Celsus, Greek Philosopher, c. 175 AD

"Jesus had acquired miraculous powers, and by means of these he proclaimed himself to be a god."

Babylonian Talmud, Rabbinic Text, c. 200-500 AD

"On the eve of Passover Yeshu was hanged for the charge of practicing sorcery and enticing Israel, with no person stepping forward to plead on his behalf."

2.

Manuscripts & Archaeology

Ancient manuscripts and archaeology anchor the New Testament in real history:

The John Rylands Papyrus, (P52):

The New Testament was written c. 50-100 AD, and our earliest physical witness to the Gospel of John, Rylands P52, dates to as early as 100-125 AD (only decades later):



John 18:31-33 | John 18:37-38

The Pilate Stone:

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea who sentenced Jesus to crucifixion, saying "I find no guilt in this man." (Lk 23:4); "Shall I crucify your King?" (Jn 19:15)

In Caesarea Maritima a stone was found, inscribed ca. 26-37 AD with the name of Pontius Pilate, specifying that he was indeed the prefect of Judea:



"Pontius Pilate, prefect of Judea."

The Ossuary of Caiaphas:

Caiaphas was the High Priest of Israel who oversaw the trial of Jesus, saying "It is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish." (John 11:52). Josephus records that "Joseph Caiaphas" was High Priest from 18 to 36 AD.

In Jerusalem, an ornate limestone ossuary (or bone box) was found, dated to the 1st century AD. It is inscribed two times with the name "Joseph bar Caiaphas":



"Joseph, son of Caiaphas"

3.

Eyewitness Suffering & Martyrdom

The Apostles who claimed to see the risen Jesus chose death rather than deny it:

James the Apostle:

"Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword."*

The Acts of the Apostles, c. 62-80 AD

*See James' death prophesied by Jesus: Mark 10:37-39.

James, the Brother of Jesus:

"Ananus assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others; and with an accusation formed against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned."

Josephus, c. 93 AD

Peter the Apostle:

"Peter endured not one but many labors, and thus having borne his testimony, went to his appointed place of glory."*

Clement of Rome, c. 95 AD

*See Peter's death prophesied by Jesus:

All of the Apostles:

"I know that after His resurrection Jesus was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, 'Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit.' And immediately they touched Him, and believed, being convinced both by His flesh and spirit. For this cause also they despised death, and were found its conquerors."*

Ignatius of Antioch, c. 107 AD†

*See the Apostle John testify to seeing, hearing, and touching the incarnate and risen Christ: 1 John 1:1-4.

"Paul and the rest of the Apostles are in their due place in the presence of the Lord, with whom also they suffered, for they loved not the present world."

Polycarp of Smyrna, c. 110 AD‡

† 107 AD: Ignatius was martyred for Christ in Rome.

‡ 155 AD: Polycarp was martyred for Christ in Smyrna.