

" 1×10^{17} " and Fulfilled Prophecy

Divide the number "1" by " 1×10^{17} " (which is 1 followed by 17 zeros).

This is the probability that one person could *randomly* fulfill just *eight* of the prophecies found in the Bible, which identify for us who the Son of God is. This is one chance out of 100,000,000,000,000,000 (one hundred quadrillion).

We don't have the ability to comprehend this number - it is just too large. The best we can do is to try (at least a little bit), by way of some examples:

- Suppose we cover the entire state of Texas with silver dollars, to the depth of 2 feet. Take one of the silver dollars and mark an "X" on it. Thoroughly mix the coins (including the one with the "X"). Spend several years randomly walking around the state, blindfolded, and then randomly pick up one of the coins. What is the chance that the coin you randomly picked would be the one with the "X"? About the same as a person *randomly* fulfilling these eight prophecies.

You could try this with Girl Scout Thin Mint cookies, as well. (You could even eat a few!) But the big obstacle is that many people don't realize how *big* Texas is. So let's try a few other illustrations.

- There are many types of state and multi-state lottery tickets that are available around the world. There are also raffle tickets, fund-raising lotteries, and much more. For the sake of our illustration, suppose that someone bought *one* random lottery (or raffle) ticket from somewhere in the world (randomly chosen) *one* time in his life, while blindfolded and without knowing what type of ticket it was, or even what country he was in. What chance do you think this person has, for winning the "big" US multi-state lottery, and ending up with millions upon millions of dollars? (Remember, we don't even know what country he is buying his ticket in.) Essentially a zero percent chance? Well, it's *a lot more likely* for our ticket-buyer to randomly win "the big one," than for a person to randomly fulfill just eight Old Testament prophecies. It's like a "guaranteed win," in comparison, for " 1×10^{17} " is just a horribly huge number!

Since many people don't approve of lotteries, let's move to another illustration - one of "cosmic" proportions!

- Scientists estimate that there are between 100 and 300 *billion* stars in our galaxy. What is the chance that some extra-terrestrial being would be able to *randomly* pick out one star, and that this one star would just "happen" to be the one we call our sun? (For our illustration, we will assume that this being exists... and that all his eyes - or whatever else he might have - are blindfolded, turned off, or whatever!) Well, if we settle for the average of these estimates for the number of stars, we get 200,000,000,000, or " 2×10^{11} ." Our " 1×10^{17} " is *five million times larger* than that! So our "E.T." friend would most likely pick our sun (randomly) *five million times*, for every *one time* that a person randomly fulfilled these eight prophecies!

Is the galaxy too big for you? Then try this for size!

- It has been estimated that there are somewhere between 10^{20} and 10^{25} grains of sand on the earth. That is a wide range for an estimate, but it is the best we can do, without counting them all. (Remember, this includes all the sandy beaches, the deserts, and the sandbox down at the playground.) Suppose you took *one* grain of sand and used a laser to engrave your initials on it. Now

mix it up with all the other grains of sand everywhere in the world. Since this number is actually a little bigger than the chance of fulfilling *eight* prophecies by chance, let's add a few more prophecies - let's work with perhaps twelve or fifteen. Then you'd have *about the same* chance of finding your personalized grain of sand, as there would be for a person to randomly fulfill those several prophecies.

Basically, there is *no chance* that someone could randomly fulfill these eight (or twelve or fifteen) prophecies. For it to happen, it would have to occur by *design* (a deliberate act of God). *Chance* just won't work!

Of course, Jesus, who claimed to be this "Son of God" fulfilled *over 300 prophecies* - and the likelihood of that occurring by *chance* is infinitesimally small beyond any possible comprehension. (There are not enough *electrons* in all the atoms in the universe, to make a probability comparison to this.) Besides this, many of them were fulfilled by other people who knew nothing about the prophecies - so we can't claim that Jesus merely *arranged* them to "happen." They were outside of his control! Can you imagine Jesus shouting down from the cross, "No, don't cut that robe! Cast lots [similar to dice] for it, so that Psalm 22:18 can be fulfilled!" Or during the interrogation, "Hey, could you beat me up and spit on me? After all, we have to fulfill Isaiah 50:6, don't we?" How about, "After I'm dead, make sure you poke me in the side with a spear (Zechariah 12:10) - and oh yes, don't break my legs, like you plan to do with the other two guys (Exodus 12:46 and Psalm 34:20)!" (Do you think they would have obeyed him?)

One issue is whether or not he actually did fulfill those prophecies - and there are reliable historic documents which show that he did. There are also many other types of evidence, such as the effects on the people who were eyewitnesses of the resurrection, the inability of his opponents to disprove the evidence, etc. But it is not our purpose to explore all these details right now.

This leaves us with a question: Why are there so many people who *don't* accept Jesus' claims? The answer is *not* for lack of evidence. Of course, some people might not realize how much evidence there really is, if they blindly accept what others have told them to believe. In such a case, an exposure to the evidence may clear up one issue that they wrongly assume to exist.

However, the ultimate issue is *spiritual*. If Jesus is who he claimed to be, then that requires a radical change in *us* - in our attitudes and actions. It requires us to reject the way of life we hold most dearly, in exchange for one that is increasingly unpopular in the world - and this goes against everything that is a part of our nature. If we accept Jesus' *claims*, his teachings demand that we accept his *call* and become his followers. We must submit all things to his will, and live for him, regardless of the cost. Our friends may call it "stupid" and walk away - or worse. This is the biggest obstacle for people turning to Jesus.

References

I used this article in conjunction with a series of lessons by Josh McDowell, entitled, *The Revolt Video Series* (http://www.beyondbelief.com/y_rvideo.spl). The "Texas" example is based on the example given in that series. Information for the other examples (such as the number of stars in the galaxy, etc.) were based on my own research of articles readily available on the internet. (The "lottery" example is based on the assumption that there *can't* be too many *millions* of lotteries and raffles in the world.) More information about the number " 1×10^{17} " can be obtained in Josh McDowell's book, *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1999), p.193-194. [This number is based on research presented in: Peter Winebrenner Stoner and Robert. C. Newman, *Science Speaks* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), p. 106-112.]

The specific eight prophecies used in this example are: 1) born in Bethlehem; 2) preceded by a Messenger (John the Baptizer); 3) he would enter Jerusalem on a donkey; 4) betrayed by a friend; 5) sold for 30 pieces of silver; 6) the money would be thrown "to the potter" in God's house; 7) he would be silent before his accusers; 8) executed by crucifixion with thieves.