

THE IMPROBABILITY OF THE INCARNATION

by Henry M. Morris*

Many writers have discussed the wonderful prophecies in the Old Testament foretelling the coming of Christ—prophecies about His birth, life, ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection, all of which were marvelously fulfilled by Him when He finally came. Others have written on the mathematical probability that these could have been fulfilled either by chance or by human manipulation, concluding that such probabilities were so incredibly low as to be impossible except by the power of God Himself.

For example, it was prophetically implied by Noah that, of his three sons, only Shem would be spiritually blessed in a special way (Genesis 9:26), and this would indicate that the coming Savior would be a “Shemite” instead of a Hamite or Japhethite. This would suggest a probability of one out of three.

God later chose Abraham out of Shem’s descendants, promising that *“in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”* (Genesis 12:3). Although we have no way of knowing exactly how many Shemites were in the world at the time, there must have been at least, say, 60,000¹ men. Shem had five sons, and Abraham was about ten generations down the line, with most of them living hundreds of years and having many children.

From Abraham’s eight sons, Isaac was selected (a probability of one in eight). So far as the record goes, Isaac only had two sons, so the probability of choosing Jacob would be one out of two. Then Jacob had twelve sons, from whom Judah was chosen (thus, one out of twelve).

Many hundreds of years later, the tribe of Judah had proliferated to perhaps 200,000 men and were occupying a goodly portion of the Promised Land. From them God chose a young shepherd boy named David (with, say, a probability of one out of 200,000). Of David’s nineteen sons, Solomon was chosen (one out of 19).

Multiplying these probabilities together (as required by the laws of probability), the probability that the coming Savior would be this particular descendant of Noah would be calculated as one out of the number (3 x 60,000 x 8 x 2 x 12 x 200,000 x 19) or one out of about 13 trillion.

But, that isn’t all. As it turned out, the Virgin Mary was descended from another of David’s sons, Nathan, while Jesus’ foster father Joseph was a descendant of Solomon (Luke 3:23–31; Matthew 2:7–16).

Now, however, instead of an individual, God specified through His

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prophet Micah that a certain village in Judah would be where the promised Savior would finally come into the world. *“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”* (Micah 5:2).

Bethlehem was a rather insignificant little town, but God chose Bethlehem. If there were, say, a hundred towns and villages in Judah at that time, then the human chance likelihood of Christ coming out of Bethlehem would be (humanly speaking) one in a hundred.

Combining this with all the probabilities mentioned above would yield a total probability of chance fulfillment of all of them in one individual to be about one in over a thousand trillion! The only reasonable conclusion is that all these prophecies, as well as their fulfillment in Christ, came ultimately from God Himself!

And yet, some might say, there is that one chance out of 1000 trillion, so maybe it *could* have happened naturally. Just possibly someone back in Samuel’s time might have seen something in David that suggested future leadership and someone in Terah’s time may have sensed something like that in Abram. And, of course, it could be possible that someone in Judah might have made a lucky guess that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. And so on.

Evolutionists reason along some such lines all the time. No matter how impossibly complex a particular organism may seem, they argue that anything can happen in a billion years or so, with natural selection available to retain only those features that improve fitness and survivability.

Even if evolution *could* theoretically happen by chance accumulations in deep time, however, the fact remains that no

one has any real evidence that it *did* happen. All they have real evidence for is horizontal variation within fixed limits. Anything more than that requires faith that time can work miracles. That’s why more and more scientists are becoming creationists.

Just suppose though, for the sake of argument, that all the above-mentioned prophecies *could* be explained naturalistically, including the admittedly fulfilled prophecy that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. But then what about the rest of that particular prophecy: “. . . whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2)?

How can there have been “goings forth” forever in the past from the One who is to become a human babe in Bethlehem? There is no possible answer except that the coming babe is also the eternal God. This is, therefore, not just a prophecy of where Christ would be born, but of the infinite God becoming finite man—that is, of the *Incarnation!*

How does one calculate the probability of *that*? It cannot be done, because there is no possibility of such a thing ever happening at all—except that, as the angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary: *“With God nothing shall be impossible”* (Luke 1:37).

Consider also the matter of the virgin birth, which was prophesied over 500 years before its fulfillment. *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel”* (Isaiah 7:14). The imminent fulfillment of this amazing prophecy was finally announced to Mary’s espoused husband, Joseph, also by Gabriel: *“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost”* (Matthew 1:20).

There has been no other virgin birth recorded in all human history, in comparison to perhaps 40 billion normal births

since Adam. However, an evolutionary skeptic might argue that such a thing is theoretically at least possible, especially in view of such modern genetic developments as artificial insemination, cloning, etc., as well as examples of parthenogenesis among animals. So perhaps we could assign a probability of one in 40 billion to a human virgin birth (or better, virgin conception—the actual birth being fully normal in Jesus’ case).

But Isaiah’s prophecy really includes the Incarnation also, just as Micah’s did, for Joseph was told to “*call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*” (Matthew 1:23). Thus, Jesus was actually God, with us in human flesh. “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14).

The amazing fact that the man Jesus was also none other than God Himself was also prophesied in Isaiah’s follow-up prophecy, so to speak. “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6).

This wonderful *child*, this *Son* to be given, is also “*The mighty God*” and “*The everlasting Father*.” So here is another prophecy of the Incarnation, with the eternal God entering humanity’s flesh—a prophecy, which surely has a mathematical probability of chance fulfillment of absolutely zero! Except that God is Creator and can do anything except “*deny Himself*” (II Timothy 2:13).

But how can God actually become a man, “*made of a woman*” (Galatians 4:4), without inheriting the fallen, sinful, human nature common to all men and women including Mary? The answer can only be by special creation of His human body. “. . . *for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall*

compass a man” (Jeremiah 31:22). The word rendered “compass” in this verse precisely means “enclose” and nothing else than a virgin birth could be called “*a new thing*” in this context. Note also that it required *creation!*

Therefore, a mighty miracle of special creation was involved when God became man. “*Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, . . . a body hast thou prepared me*” (Hebrews 10:5). As He had directly formed the body of the “*the first man Adam,*” so also must He form the body of “*the second man . . . the Lord from heaven*” (I Corinthians 15:45, 47). “*God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh*” (Romans 8:3). All other components of human flesh were created there in that body—even the genes which would appear to be inherited from Abraham, David, and Mary. Remember that our Creator is “*able of . . . stones to raise up children unto Abraham*” (Luke 3:8). There was no inherent sin in His *created* human flesh, of course, but only the “*likeness*” of sinful flesh.

Thus He could condemn sin in the flesh and then bear “*our sins in His own body on the tree*” (I Peter 2:24). This mightiest of all miracles, the Incarnation of the Mighty God in human flesh, was predicted long ago in the greatest of all prophecies, making possible the most wonderful of all gifts, that of eternal salvation to all who believe.

Endnotes

1. These population guesses are not intended to be accurate, of course, since no one really knows. They are probably reasonable, but in any case—whatever estimates are used—the resulting total will be such that any naturalistic explanation of these prophecies and their fulfillment has an absolutely incredibly low probability. ☞

HOW YOUNG IS THE YOUNG EARTH?

by John D. Morris

According to the mainstream Big Bang idea, our universe abruptly sprang into existence some 15 billion years ago, sending matter careening through space. After millions of years it had cooled enough to coalesce into billions of rotating proto galactic-discs, and much later into stars. Over the billions of years, some stars underwent super nova, spewing material back into space, which later coalesced into second generation stars, some of which likewise exploded, leading to third generation stars like our sun. The planets are comprised of left-over star dust which didn't fall into the sun.

Even though our earth and its solar system is thought to be about 4.6 billion years old, it is much younger than the first and second generation stars, the galaxies, and sub-atomic particles shooting everywhere through space. Indeed, hardly anything is younger than earth.

Conversely, the Bible indicates that the creation of all things was accomplished in a six-day period just a few thousand years ago. The earth was created on Day One while the sun, moon, and stars were created on Day Four. Since thousands is less than billions, the term "Young Earth" has come to describe the recent creation position.

At a recent seminar, my friend, Mr. Tom Godfrey challenged me on the use of the term "Young Earth" for the following reasons:

First, according to our creationist perspective, nothing in all of creation is older than the earth, because it was created "in the beginning" (Genesis 1:1). Consequently, if the earth is young, then everything else is as young or even younger. According

to the Big Bang idea, the universe itself is much older than the earth, so in their model the earth could be considered young in comparison. So for them, the descriptor has real meaning. Only by comparing a few thousand years with over four billion years as the age of the earth in two distinct perspectives can we rationalize the idea that the earth is "young." The validity of the term depends entirely on the existence of the two perspectives, both of which are assumed to be viable.

Second, consider a "new" building. Can we also call it a "young" building? I do not think so. A building can be old, but it cannot be young. We reserve the term *young* for things that are alive and growing toward maturity. Inanimate objects do not qualify, because they are at their best and full sized when first constructed.

So what term would be more appropriate than *young*? Terms like *new* and *recent* avoid the second problem, but not the first. If the earth is new, what can be old? What came into existence less recently from our perspective? The creation of the earth is the least recent event in history.

A dilemma indeed. I am not proposing we drop the terms young earth and old earth, for they are descriptive and well established. Tom suggests we call ourselves "historic-earth creationists," not only because it is accurate, but it acknowledges the true history of Scripture. Meanwhile, considering the term helps reinforce an important truth. 



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