

How Jesus Holds Us Accountable for Bible Prophecy!



Background on the Roman World at the Time of Jesus

At the time Jesus began His ministry on earth, only the Jews were looking for a future Messiah. Only the Jews had written prophecies from God foretelling of a time that their Messiah would come and rule the world in righteousness.

"And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one." Zech. 14:9

"... You will **judge** the peoples with uprightness and **guide** the nations on the earth."
Psa. 67:4

But Israel's redeemer had yet to come, and the cruel Roman rule was detested by all of Israel as they waited for their Messiah.

The Jewish hierarchy, mostly Pharisees and Sadducees, controlled the theocratic Israeli government and worked with the Roman officials to stay in power. They promised Rome there would be no problems if they allowed the Jews to:

- > Worship in their Temple
- > Celebrate their feasts
- > Make their sacrifices

This partnership kept the Jewish hierarchy in power and prestige.

But even though Israel managed to have some autonomy, Rome still had ultimate rule...and it was a vicious rule.

The glory of the pro-Israel days of King Herod the Great, who died in 4 BC, was fading fast.

After Herod's death, his son Archelaus ruled over Jerusalem, Jaffa and Caesarea for nine years, 4 BC to 6 AD. He acted like a pompous king wearing all white and sitting on a golden throne.

Archelaus made pagan changes to the outside of the Jewish Temple by force. Trying to keep peace, he had his army kill 3,000 Jews. He even cancelled an entire Passover! Obviously, he was loathed by the Jews. (3)

With the tax receipts from Jerusalem to Rome dropping and his inability to keep peace and rule effectively, Archelaus was eventually replaced by an appointed Prefect by Roman government.

[Pontius Pilate](#), who was ruling at the time of Jesus' ministry, was the third in a series of these appointed Prefects to exercise an iron-clad rule over the Jews in Jerusalem.



King Herod built many new buildings in Israel, including expanding the Temple Mount and rebuilding the Temple from the foundation up.

However, not all the Jews were willing to wait for the Messiah. Between 20 AD and Jesus' death in 33 AD, there were some 60 Jewish insurrections put down by Rome.

The biggest rip-your-robe and throw-dirt-in-the-air of the Roman rules was that they made the Jews use Roman coins-forbidding Israel from minting and using its time-honored shekel.

And adding to the Jewish misery, most Roman coins had a physical image inscribed on the coins. The Jews thought this was blasphemous, due to the 2nd of the 10 commandments.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth." Ex. 20:4



*Typical Roman coin
in 30 AD*

And using a coin with Caesar's picture on it to pay for the mandatory 1/2 shekel Temple tax was detestable.

"Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a [Roman] denarius. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." Matt. 22:19-21

So by 30 AD the Roman taxes were sky-high and the tension between Rome and Israel was at a fever-pitch. The people in Israel prayed daily for relief as they waited for their Messiah to come, defeat Rome and set up His prophesied kingdom.

Messianic Expectations

This was the life and times of the Jews into which Jesus was born. He began His ministry in this tense environment, and to local Jewish observers the miracles He performed made Him look, sound and act like He could be the prophesied Messiah.

This is why Jesus was asked so many times, by a wide range of people, whether He was the Messiah, the King of the Jews. Was He the Messiah? Had He come to set up His Kingdom?

So, expectations of a coming Messiah were quite rampant in Israel when Jesus came on the scene. King Herod mentions the future Messiah when the wise men came to Jerusalem looking for the King Who had just been born:

*"Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, [Herod] inquired of them where the **Messiah** was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: Matt. 2:4-5*

The Samaritan woman at the well mentions the Messiah:

*"The woman said to Him, 'I know that **Messiah is coming** (He who is called Christ);'" John 4:25*

Prior to Jesus' arrest, the Pharisees ask about the Messiah:

*"Now having been **questioned by the Pharisees** as to when the **kingdom of God** was coming, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;'" Luke 17:20*



Pontius Pilate quizzed Him...

*"Pilate questioned Him, 'Are You the **King of the Jews?**'" Mark 15:2*

The two thieves on the cross both mentioned it:

*"One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, '**Are You not the Christ?** [redeemer] Save Yourself and us!'" Luke 23:39*

*"And he was saying, 'Jesus, remember me when You come in Your **kingdom!**'" Luke 23:42*

Even after Jesus' resurrection, His somewhat still-confused disciples asked Him if He was now going to set up His "kingdom."

*"So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the **kingdom** to Israel?'" Acts 1:6*

It was in this climate that Jesus spent 3 1/2 years healing myriads of sick and lame people all over Israel. He did so much in those few short years that John wrote:

*"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even **the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.**" John 21:25*

In 3 1/2 years Jesus criss-crossed the Holyland at a dizzying pace, drawing HUGE crowds everywhere He went.

*"Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.**" Matt. 4:23-25*

But His incredible miracles were not welcomed by everyone in the land. The Jewish ruling authorities were at their wits' end. They feared He had grown so well known that if they allowed Him to continue, the populace would inaugurate Him as King and they would lose their power.

*"Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. **If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.**'" John 11:47-48*

Trying to catch and kill Jesus

So after 3 1/2 years, we find Jesus and His disciples walking up the road from Jericho to Jerusalem for the required attendance of the Passover celebration.

Partial list of places Jesus visited in the Holyland

Bethlehem - Matt. 2:1
Jerusalem - Luke 2:22
Egypt - Matt. 2:14
Nazareth - Luke 2:39-40
Jordan River - Matt. 3:13
The Wilderness - Matt. 4:1
Galilee - Matt. 4:12
Cana - John 2:1
Judea - John 4:3
Samaria - John 4:4
Sychar - John 4:5
Nain - Luke 7:11
Capernaum - Matt. 4:13
Sea of Galilee - Matt. 4:18
The Gadarenes - Matt. 8:28
Gennesaret - Matt. 14:34
Tyre and Sidon - Matt 15:21
Magadan - Matt. 15:39
Caesarea Philippi - Matt. 16:13.
Judea past Jordan - Matt. 19:1.
Bethany - John 12:1
Jericho - Mark 10:46
Mount of Olives - Luke 22:39
Gethsemane - Matt. 26:36
Golgotha - Matt. 27:33
Bethsaida - Luke 9:10
Temple Mount - Matt. 21:12

*"Three times a year **all your males** shall appear before the Lord GOD." Ex. 23:17*

But Jesus stopped short of Jerusalem by a mile or so to spend the night with Lazarus in Bethany.

One week earlier Jesus had raised Lazarus back to life. It was His biggest miracle yet and was performed right under the noses of those who wished to kill Him.

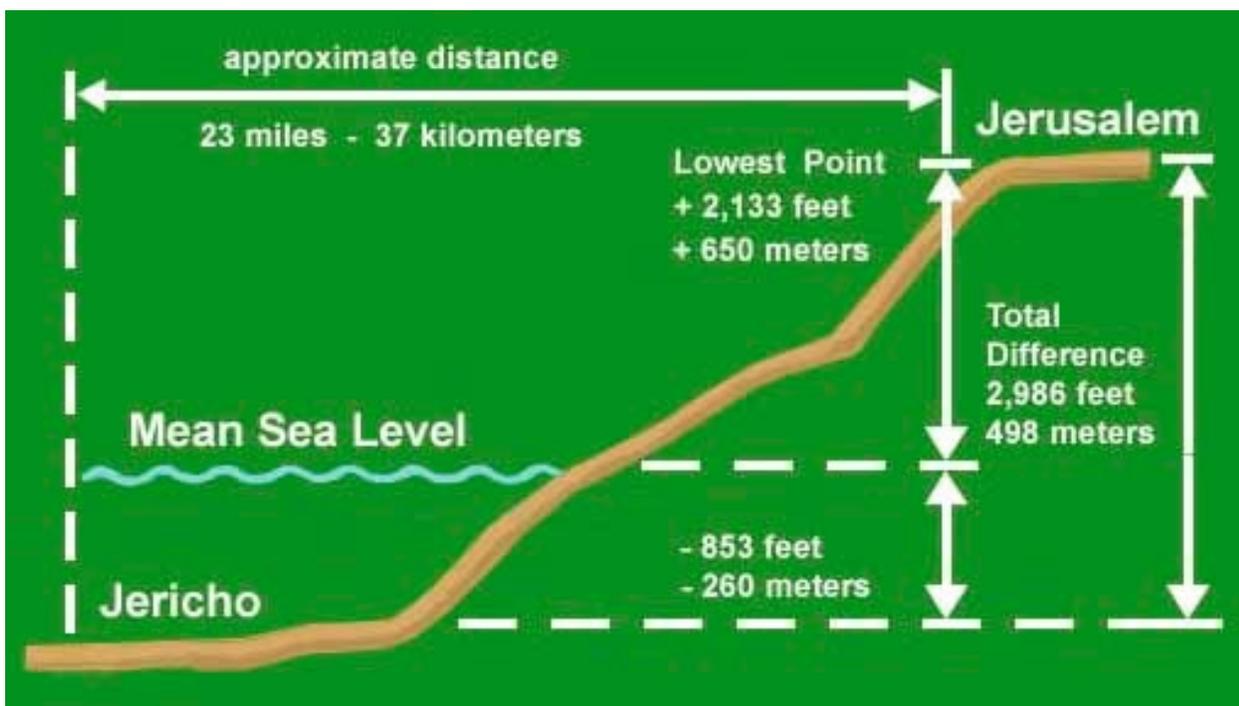
Lazarus had been dead for four days-the corpse was even beginning to rot and smell. So there was no doubt to anyone that he was quite dead.

The Roman historian Tacitus said 2,700,000 Jews came for the Passover celebration each year. Since only 350,000 or so could cram inside the walls of Jerusalem, the rest would have to camp in side-by-side tents and makeshift shelters easily stretching as far as Bethany. (1)

Therefore, when Jesus raised stinky Lazarus from the dead, everyone in town heard about it. Raising Lazarus from the dead was the talk of the town for the millions arriving for Passover.

Jesus, knowing the purpose for which He had come to earth, was simply stoking the fires of the Pharisees. They had given the order that if anyone knew where He was, they were to report it so Jesus could be seized.

After raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus left for one last week, sort of a good-bye trip to friends and family, and performing his last miracles in Galilee and the Jordan Valley.



His last stop was in Jericho, where He healed two blind men and spent the night with Zaccheus, a rich tax-gatherer who got saved by believing Jesus was the Messiah.

The next day Jesus departs Jericho on the road to Jerusalem, a day's journey by foot, weaving 23 miles up a total elevation of 3,000 feet through the Judean Desert.

*"As they were leaving Jericho, **a large crowd** followed Him." Matt. 20:29*

Jesus arrived at Lazarus' house just before dark on Friday evening as the whole city shut down at dusk for Shabbat. But when Shabbat was over, the crowds came to Lazarus' house... to see both of them!

*"**The large crowd** of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they **might also see Lazarus**, whom He raised from the dead. John 12:9*

By this time the chief priests had seen enough. The entire town, 2 to 3 million people, was talking about Jesus. Was He the Messiah? Would He come to Passover so they could see Him?

*"So **they were seeking for Jesus**, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, 'What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?'" John 11:56*

So in their fearful state of mind, the Chief Priests somehow determined that killing both Jesus AND Lazarus would solve the problem!

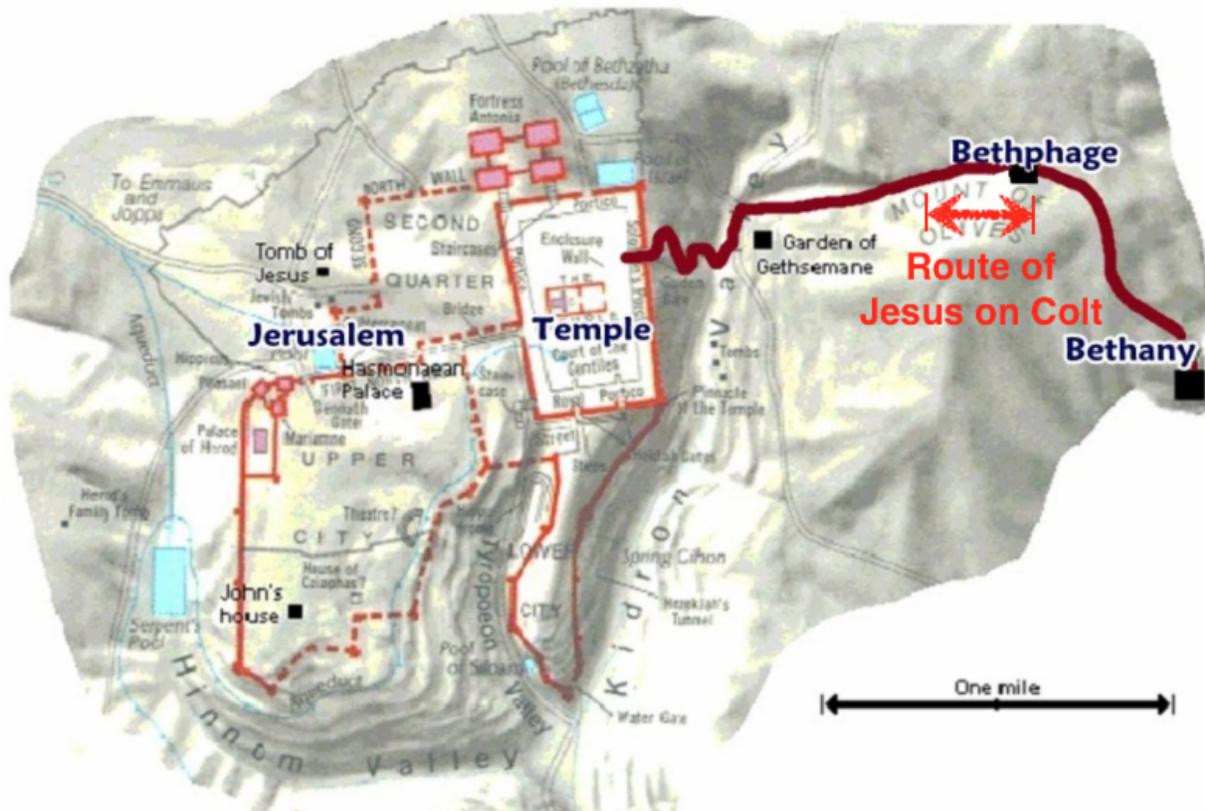
*"But the chief priests planned to **put Lazarus to death** also; because on account of him **many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.**" John 12:10-11*

*"So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are not doing any good; look, **the world has gone after Him.**'" John 12:19*

So the day after Shabbat, Sunday, with the Pharisees seeking to kill Him, Jesus did the unthinkable. He sent two of His disciples to get a colt in nearby Bethphage so He could PUBLICLY ride it about a quarter-mile to the top of the Mount of Olives.

"When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you,

and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me.'" Matt. 21:1-2



This was a special day. Christians refer to it as Palm Sunday, because the throngs of people lining the narrow street threw their coats down in front of Jesus riding the colt while waving palm branches.

"Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!'" Matt. 21:8-9

This must have been some sight. If they hadn't seen Jesus healing people in their hometown, they certainly had heard about Him. The crowd would have been in the thousands... which means thousands of coats and palm branches would have been spread over the road.

And with people deliriously screaming "Jesus is the Messiah!" it must have been a celebration atmosphere beyond description. The Jews DO know how to party!

But there were also Pharisees in the crowd watching all this take place. Again, fearing they were losing their power and influence, they demanded Jesus stop being called "King."

"Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.' But Jesus answered, 'I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!'" Luke 19:39-40

Jesus made the profound statement that the crowd had to proclaim Him Messiah or the rocks would have to speak out that truth!

This sets up the most incredible fulfillment of Bible prophecy to date. For 3 1/2 years Jesus had discouraged any talk about Him being the Messiah. In Caesarea-Philippi, when Peter made his famous "You are the Christ" statement, Jesus said yes, He was the Messiah, but not to tell anyone.

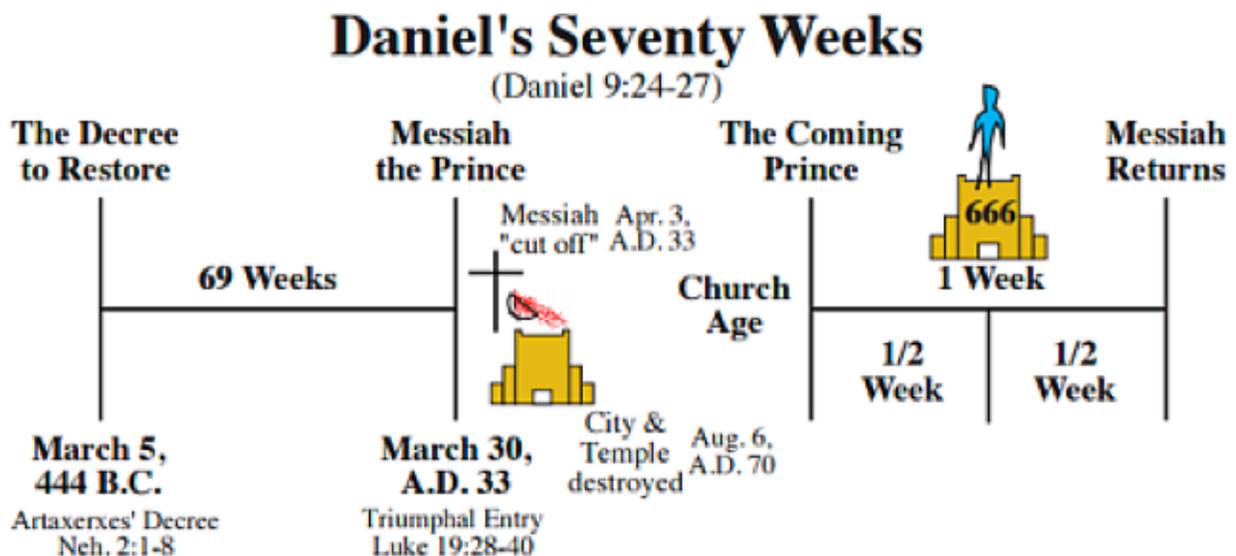
*"Then He warned the disciples that they should **tell no one** that He was the Christ." Matt. 16:20*

But on this day, things had changed. On this day Jesus allowed, even encouraged, the multitudes to welcome Him as their Messiah. What was different? Why did Jesus say it was now OK to call Him Messiah and/or King?

The reason is simple. This was a prophesied day that the Jews should have recognized. The "70 Weeks" (490 years) prophecy given by Daniel had begun to count down 173,880 days earlier. (2)

"Seventy weeks (weeks of years, 490 years total) have been decreed for your people and your holy city,..." Dan 9:24

"Then after the sixty-two weeks (483 years from the beginning of the prophecy, 173,880 total days), the Messiah will be cut off ("executed")." Dan. 9:26



When Jesus got to the top of the Mount of Olives, seeing the Temple in the distance, He dismounted the donkey and cried. The Greek word actually means "sobbed."

*"When He approached Jerusalem, **He saw the city and wept** over it, saying, 'If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.'" Luke 19:41*

The Daniel 9:24-27 prophecy was being fulfilled right before the Pharisees' eyes. Daniel gave the exact day the Messiah would arrive. This was that day!

And, despite the prophecy in Daniel, the ruling Jewish hierarchy totally missed it! Instead of watching for and welcoming the Messiah, they instead crucified Him.

But the main point is that Jesus was holding the Pharisees accountable for knowing, understanding and applying Bible prophecy.

Interestingly, the Daniel 9 prophecy wasn't even in the first five books of the Bible (the Torah) that were read completely through once a year on Shabbat (each Saturday). You had to dig a little to find this scriptural nugget...and think a lot to understand it.

So we should learn a great lesson...Jesus believes Bible prophecy is important! He expects us to know, understand and apply latter-day prophecies! We'll probably also have to dig a little. But it's important to include it in our overall Biblical studies.



Too many churches today are moving away from teaching prophecy, usually saying it's too divisive. Well, Jesus sure thinks it's important. And it broke His heart when the Jews missed His arrival.

Therefore, we can safely and boldly say that Jesus wants us to know all about the Rapture and His Second Coming! And, as you're probably fully aware, Jesus

is coming again! And with some 28% of the Bible actually being prophetically oriented, most Christians should be doing more, not less, study of Bible prophecy! Most importantly, Bible prophecy is an incredible witnessing tool as it gives hope to a hurting world! Jesus is coming as a just and righteous King of the World.

When the Church is Raptured, the more people left behind who understand what just happened (even though they didn't believe it at the time), the more likely they'll make decisions that count for eternity. For example, "Refuse the Mark!"

So, since we're living in the last of the last days, it's incumbent to us to have a working knowledge of what's ahead. We're to be ready to make a defense of what we believe.

"...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 1Pet. 3:15

And, if you really want to have fun and enjoy a prophetically enlightening day, join us for the **Steeling the Mind Bible Prophecy Conference** in Spokane, WA, on Saturday, February 25th. Live at the Davenport Hotel, or live in your own home via Simulcast for just \$29.

It's a full day of great speakers hammering away on tough topics designed to STEEL YOUR MIND with Biblical truth!

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17

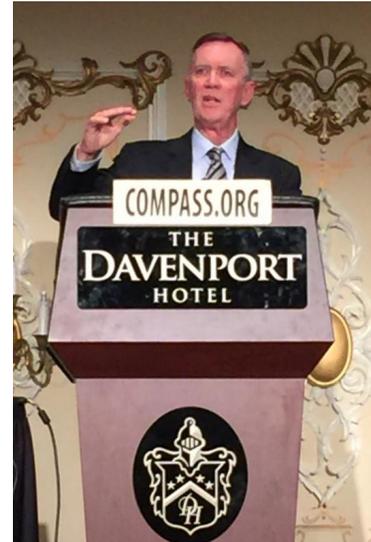
[Click here](#) for schedule, speakers, topics and simulcast information!

Shalom!

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Notes

- 1- <http://www.bible-history.com/backd2/jerusalem.html>
- 2- Charting the Bible Chronologically, Hindson & Ice, Harvest House, p.97
- 3- Living in the Time of Jesus, Connolly, Steimatzky, p. 46



Tom Cloud will be speaking in Spokane