

# 3

## The world's most prophetic book

The evidence you never heard



## Discussion Guide #3

### OPENING DISCUSSION

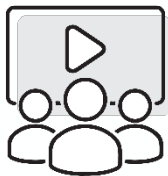
**Purpose:** For the participants to connect and engage in conversations about the wider topic.

1. Have you ever had a feeling you've been somewhere before (a 'Deja vu') or a dream that then seemed to come true – and it really amazed you?
2. How well do you think you could predict 5 unusual things that would happen in the coming week?

Today we're looking at prophecy in the Bible, to consider some of the predictions and their fulfilments.



**PRAYER**



**WATCH VIDEO #3**

### DISCUSSION PART 1 – WHY CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

**Purpose:** For participants to recognise both the miracle of Biblical prophecy, and Jesus as a fulfilment of ancient prophecy recorded in the Bible.

1. If it could be shown that predictions made in the Bible had consistently come true, what would that tell us about the Bible – and then also about God?

*(Consider a Divine hand behind the Bible validating its message / God is outside of time / God knows future from past / A basis to trust his future promises of hope and good conquering evil...)*

2. What did the video suggest as the purpose of J Barton Payne's academic study – and why is that perspective important?\* *(Optional: See free downloadable Booklet #3, Pg 8)*

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3. What discovery or ancient publication removed all questions related to the reliability of the original predictions – which Jesus then fulfilled?

*(Optional: See Booklet #3, Pg 7 – the Septuagint / Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The Qumran scrolls achieved the same – as referred to in video series, Episode #3)*

4. Examine the list of predictions that Jesus fulfilled in the video or booklets (Optional: Detail at Pg 19 of Booklet #3). According to Prof Stoner's students, what was the probability of getting selected 8 predictions correct across the time of their prediction to fulfilment?

*(Optional: What was the probability of getting 48 selected predictions correct? See Pg 20 of downloadable Booklet #3)*

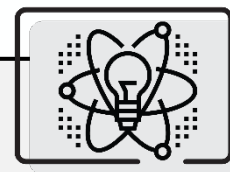
### Three examples

*Discussion facilitator: The purpose is to help them see something of the reality of the predictions – in a short space of time. We suggest you consider only as many examples as you have time for. If you include question #6, make sure you read what is suggested to understand the timing options for that prediction).*

4. **Participants read (some or all of) Isaiah 53.** Where do you see predictions that fit Jesus' life?
5. **Participants read (some or all of) Psalm 22.** Where do they see predictions that fit Jesus' life?\*\*\* (The footnote below summarises some examples)
- 5a. Read Matthew 27:46. Where do those words come from – and what is their significance or meaning?

### Learning Point:

Because the books of the Bible weren't numbered, in Jesus' time a Psalm was identified by its first line. When Jesus said this – in modern English, he was saying "Psalm 22". What then might have been his point? He was saying *that the whole Psalm expressed his thoughts and feelings at that time* – which is remarkable when we look to see that a dozen of its details were fulfilled in clear within his experiences.



6. **Have group members read Daniel 9:25-26.** How can the timing in this be calculated?

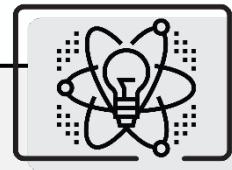
*(Optional: In your preparation time see Pg 26-29 – while also noting the end notes that explain the significance of the numbers chosen, highlighting two variables that affect how the time gap is calculated).*

7. **(A general question):** Are there any other Biblical predictions people are aware of that have amazed them?

8. With a few examples now considered, why do sceptics continue to deny the possibility of any Biblical prediction being fulfilled as a supernatural act – irrespective of any evidence?  
*(Optional: See Pg 25 and note again Michaels's story as in the video or on Pg 29).*

## DISCUSSION PART 2 – ENGAGING THE CONVERSATION

**Purpose:** For participants to realise they must first consider the person with whom they wish to communicate, before considering the type of story that will best engage them.



### Learning Point:

#### Adapting within conversation *(2 minutes to read)*

As a reminder, the goal in our conversations is to win people more so than to win arguments. Our manner is important – and Jesus' example of communication through stories and questions is a good one to follow.

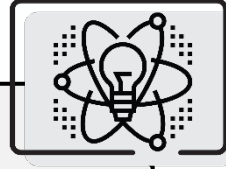
#### In noting our six types of stories for conversations, we could remember...

1. Stories from our own life experience
2. Stories from other people's life experience
3. Stories from history
4. Stories from the natural world
5. Stories from reason, logic and science
6. Stories from the Bible

**The question to consider is:** Which type of story might be best to communicate with this person? To put that differently, what might this person be ready for on their journey? No conversation can cover everything.

It's also worth noting that Jesus engaged in this same gentle and adaptive manner –helping people to take their next step forward in faith. If we observe Jesus in conversation, he engaged every person differently.

*Cont'd...*



### Learning Point cont'd:

As a pattern...

- He *engaged* with interested people
- But only sought to *intrigue* the disinterested
- While he *deflected* the hostile! (See more on this in our 'Because We Care' video series which is about 'conversational skills for outreach'. [AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members](http://AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members), or search 'Because We Care' in the YouVersion Bible app).

This is to say, he didn't always engage directly or openly. He considered his audience – and shared what he believed was needed for their next step.

Consider that Jesus often told stories that he never explained to the crowds – only later to his disciples (Matthew 13:34, John 16:29-30, John 4:34).

We therefore need to discern where people are at in their faith and journey. Sometimes the goal is merely to intrigue a person – to stir interest or a thought. A story with a cheerful comment or question can achieve this well.

We must remember that our conversations with people are sometimes just a small 'stepping stone' on their journey. No single conversation can say everything. However, because every person matters – every conversation matters. Even if our engagement is very small, it is still important that we engage.



### An Exercise\*\*\*

List possible objections to the miracle of predictive prophecy in the Bible, then consider the below three questions.

1. What **possible points** could you make in response to this objection?
2. What **stories or illustrations** could you briefly insert into your conversation (ideally with humour) to communicate in an interesting yet gentle way?
3. What **questions** could you ask that might help to make these points, or to open discussion around them?

### Optional extension to the Exercise:

In pairs, raise possible objections relating to today's topic. Then take turns to engage each other in a conversation using cheerful comments, simple stories and questions.



### TO TAKE HOME

What is the main thing you take away from today's discussion?

### For next week

- Group facilitator – please promote next week's discussion topic as being meaningful and interesting.
- As an option to go deeper, encourage members to read the next downloadable booklet prior to next week's video and discussion.
- Encourage members to note down any further questions they have on this topic during the week – as these will potentially be discussed next week.



### CLOSE WITH PRAYER

## Notes for the discussion facilitator

\* Payne's study was about what he felt could be proven. To test a prediction we logically need to consider the date and intent of the original prediction – and then also the date and reliability of details in the claimed fulfilment. The study is important because it can validate the Bible as a Divinely inspired book – placing it on a 'shelf' all of its own, distinct from every other piece of literature ever written. The miracle certainly serves to further validate the message of the Bible, as also God's existence outside of time. This in turn gives a basis for trusting God's future promises of hope, in which good triumphs over evil.

**\*\* Ps 22 – For a very simple summary of the remarkable parallels in this chapter to Jesus' experience**

- V1 - Jesus was considered forsaken
- V6 – Jesus was despised
- V7 – Jesus was mocked and insulted
- V8 – Onlookers said 'Let the Lord rescue him' (Matthew 27:41-43, Luke 23:35)
- V13f – Regarding physical sufferings we note Jesus' torture/whipping
- V15 – Jesus was thirsty while dying
- V16 – A remarkable prediction of the piercing of hands and feet before the punishment of crucifixion had been invented
- V17 Regarding his bones on display / gloated over – he was naked on the cross
- V 18 - Lots were cast by the soldiers for his garments
- V19f - His remaining faith in God who would ultimately deliver him still
- V26f – An end result that affects all the nations, with God's rule enveloping the earth as a result.

**\*\*\* Reminders**

- Different types of stories will speak to different people. A personal story is sometimes more powerful than a factual one.
- As a habit, at the end of any short story always remember to ask a question.
- Note the videos and (downloadable) booklets are full of potential stories to remember and tell in your own words.