

What We Believe... Why We Believe It

By  
Joe Sixpack



## How to Prove God Exists—Part II

Last week we presented the Arguments from Nature and Conscience as proofs for the existence of God. We'll finish up this week with the Bad Man/Mad Man Argument.

In a court of law, in order to keep the jury firm hearing certain facts the prosecutor wishes to convey in his opening statement, the defense attorney will say that he *stipulates* that information. Well, I'm going to ask you to *stipulate* to certain facts. If I don't ask you to do this, this will go on forever! The facts I am going to ask you to stipulate are no-brainers. In fact, in 30 years of doing this I've never had anyone try to challenge these facts. Of course, 99.9% of the people I've dealt with could actually tie their shoes without drooling on themselves.

The first thing I want you to stipulate is that the Old Testament is ancient Hebrew literature. I'm not claiming it is inspired, infallibly true, or anything else; only that it's ancient Hebrew literature.

The second stipulation I'm asking from you is that Jesus of Nazareth was a real historical person. I'm not saying he's the messiah, God, the son of God or anything else; only that he was a real historical person.

Some people may say that the only thing you have to support Jesus' historical existence is the Bible. But that's not so at all. That Jesus was a real historical person is attested to by the writings of men who were contemporaries of Jesus. Specifically, I'm talking about Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Flavius Josephus. The first three men were pagans and certainly no friends of Jesus. Flavius Josephus was like Paul: he was both a Jew and a Roman citizen, and he was most assuredly not at all sympathetic to Jesus. The writings of these four men, historical scholars tell us, validate the four Gospels, making them historically reliable. So we not only have the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but we also have the writings of Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Flavius Josephus.

So with these two stipulations made, we can now present our argument.

First, we'll consider the Old Testament prophecies of the coming messiah. The Old Testament is filled with such prophecies, particularly in the books of Jeremiah, Isaiah, the Psalms, and even the very first promise of a messiah in the early part of Genesis. We're still not claiming these prophecies are true, but rather that they are in the Old Testament.

If we were to take all the messianic prophecies and list them in a column, then read all the accounts of the life of Jesus, we find that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies perfectly. But does this prove that Jesus was the messiah? No! Applying logic and reason, we can deduce that Jesus of Nazareth could only be one of three types of persons: a bad man, a mad man, or who he says he is.

Could Jesus have been a bad man? Could a bad man—a criminal—wake up one day and decide that he would fulfill all the messianic prophecies? He might reason that if he could convince the people that he was the messiah by fulfilling the prophecies, he'd be hailed as their king. He could raise an army and rout the Romans out of Israel, become very wealthy and powerful, have lots of women and material wealth, and so on. Could a bad man do that?

Sure he could, but this sort of reasoning breaks down with one prophecy. One of the prophecies says that the messiah would have to die. Now, would a criminal work so hard to fulfill all the prophecies if he knew he'd have to die? I know I wouldn't! One hallmark of a criminal is that they are selfish and think of themselves before they think of anyone else. So Jesus couldn't have been a criminal. Not a chance!

Could Jesus have been a mad man? Could a mad man wake up one day and say, "What's that, God? You say I'm the messiah and I need to start fulfilling prophecy? Okay, God!" Would or could a mad man do that? Again, that is certainly a possibility, especially with a smart lunatic, but reason and experience with the insane tells us this won't work. Why? Consistency. A mad man can't remain consistent long enough to pull this off.

Jesus was far from insane. The science of psychology only began in 1879. Psychologists agree that if Jesus was nothing else, he was both sane and consistent. While they may not agree with what he taught (or at least the various interpretations of what he taught), they certainly agree he was sane. Therefore, Jesus could not have been a mad man.

If Jesus couldn't have been a bad man, and if he couldn't have been a mad man, then he must have been who he said he was. And who did he say he was? He said he was God! Jesus repeatedly claimed to be God (cf. John 10:24-31, et alia), but my personal favorite is found in John 8:58. Here's what took place...

“The Jews then said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple”.

Now Jesus' comment saying that he is "I am" seems pretty innocuous to most of us, and maybe it doesn't even make sense to many of us, but it was enough to make the Jews want to kill him. Why? Well, to get the answer to that we have to go back to the third chapter of Exodus. It is here that God just gave Moses his marching orders to go to the children of Israel as His messenger and their liberator.

“Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they ask me, “What is his name?” what shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, “I AM has sent me to you.”’

I AM: the statement of the all-eternal. Every Hebrew male in those days was obliged to memorize the entire Pentateuch, or first five books of the Old Testament, so the Jews understood by Jesus' statement exactly who he was claiming to be. He was claiming to be God, so they sought his death for blasphemy.

So, if Jesus couldn't have been a bad man, and He couldn't have been a mad man, and He had to be who He said He is, and He said He is God, we must conclude that God exists!

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