There are many great apologetic books that you could leave with students if only they would read them. But they probably won’t. They might, however, skim through a magazine. So we compiled the most convincing apologetics for the existence of God and the best evidence for Jesus into two highly graphic magazines and had the designers of Relevant magazine make it look really cool.

Y-Origins deals with proofs for the existence of God ranging from arguments from Intelligent Design to the nature of man (mind, aesthetics, morality, etc.).

Hebrew was the Messiah’s identity encrypted within ancient prophecy.
So, could Jesus have been a fake Messiah, holing even the most noteworthy religion scholars? Is it possible he was groomed by his parents or undisclosed mentors to become the long-promised king that Israel had been looking for?

In fact, if Jesus was an imposter, he would not be the first person in the history of Israel to have lied about being the Messiah. Through the centuries prior to Christ’s birth, and afterward as well, many self-proclaimed messiahs arose, only to be shown to be con artists or charlatans.

Ancient Hebrew prophecies had clearly predicted the reign of a future king who would bring peace to Israel and be their Savior. A sense of expectancy filled the land and captivated Jewish hopes and aspirations. In such an atmosphere as Israel’s, anyone aspiring to shudder at their words. A true prophet’s messages were never wrong.

So consider a prophet’s dilemma: death if he was proved wrong and the possibility of death if he was right. No true prophet wanted to offend God, and just as few wanted to be shown in half. Thus most prophets waited until they were absolutely convinced that God had spoken, or else they kept their mouths shut. Kings began to shudder at their words. A true prophet’s messages were never wrong.

Now here’s a question: how would the accuracy of these biblical prophets match up with today’s psychics?

To consider whether modern psychics’ accuracy approaches that of biblical prophets, let’s take Jean Dixon as a case study. This American psychic seemed to have a special ability to foretell events. But upon analysis, her reputation seems unwarranted.

For instance, Dixon had a vision that on February 5, 1962, a child was born in the Middle East who would transform the world by the year 2000. This special man would create a one-world religion and bring lasting world peace. She saw a cross growing above this man until it covered the whole earth. According to Dixon, this child would be a descendant of the ancient Egyptian Queen Nefertiti. 1

Where is this guy? Have you seen him? And how about that lasting world peace—it’s nice, huh?

In fact, an exhaustive search of her publicized fulfillments were prophecies so intentionally vague as any number of events could have been hailed as fulfillments.

Even the widely publicized prophecies of Nostradamus have frequently been proved wrong in spite of his vague oracles, which are difficult to disprove. The other 8 percent were questions that are generally the track record of modern psychics. "The People’s Almanac" researched the predictions of 25 top psychics, 92 percent of the predictions had proved wrong. The other 8 percent were questionable and could be explained by chance or general knowledge of circumstances. In other experiments with the world’s foremost psychics, their rate of accuracy has been shown to hover around 11 percent, which might not be a bad average except for the fact that people making random guesses about the future score at the same percentile. This doesn’t disprove all future telling, but it certainly explains why psychics aren’t winning the lottery.
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Ancient Hebrew prophecies had clearly predicted the reign of a future king who would bring peace to Israel and be their Savior. A sense of expectancy filled the air. As such an atmosphere as Israel’s, it was a most hazardous occupation. Even when they were telling the truth, prophets might be killed or thrown into prison by people who didn’t like what they were saying. (Some kings hated hearing bad news.) According to historical accounts, the prophet Isaiah was sawn in half.

God’s MOUTH PIECES

The God of the Hebrews spoke to his people through prophets, men and women who were especially attuned to God and who may or may not have been a part of the religious establishment. Some of the prophets’ messages were for the present; others, for the future. Either way, their role was to proclaim God’s declarations and disclosures to the people.

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In fact, an exhaustive search of her predictions yields two indisputable facts. Her rate of accuracy is equivalent to those guessing the future (about 11 percent, and her most publicized fulfillments were prophesies so intentionally vague as any number of events could have been hailed as fulfillments. 2

Even the widely publicized prophesies of Nostradamus have frequently been proved wrong in spite of his vague oracles, which are difficult to disprove. 3 For example, here is one of the predictions of Nostradamus: 4

Takes the Goddess of the Moon, for his Day & Movement: A frantic wanderer and witness of Gods Law,

In awakening the worlds great regions to Gods will (Ches Wills). 5

This is said to be about the death of Princess Diana. (You were probably thinking Margaret Thatcher.) Prophecies like this are as nebulous as seeing images in clouds. Yet some insist this is evidence of a Nostradamus prophecy fulfilled. Highly suspect, but difficult to disprove.

And this is generally the track record of psychics. When “The People’s Almanac” researched the predictions of 25 top psychics, 92 percent of the predictions had proved wrong. The other 8 percent were questionable and could be explained by chance or general knowledge of circumstances. 6 In other experiments with the world’s foremost psychics their rate of accuracy has been shown to hover around 11 percent, which might not be a bad average except for the fact that people making random guesses about the future score at the same percentage. This doesn’t disprove all future telling, but it certainly explains why psychics aren’t winning the lottery.
According to the Hebrew requirements that a prophecy must have a 100 percent rate of accuracy, the true Messiah of Israel must fulfill them all or else he is not the Messiah.

And if you put this degree of accuracy into everyday perspective, you can see how astounding it is. For example, it would have been miraculous if in 1910 you had predicted that a man named George Bush would win the 2000 election. But imagine if you had included some of these details in your prediction:

- The candidate with the most total votes would lose the election.
- All major TV networks would announce the winner and then reverse themselves.
- One state (Florida) would swing the election.
- The U.S. Supreme Court would ultimately determine the winner.

Had such occurred, there would be churches named after you and dashboard statuettes bearing your likeness. But you didn’t, so there aren’t. As difficult (or impossible) as it would be in 1910 to have accurately predicted this precise sequence of events, the odds are incredibly more difficult for Jesus, or any one person, to have fulfilled all the Hebrew prophecies for the Messiah. Contained within the Old Testament, written hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, are 61 specific prophecies and nearly 300 references about the Messiah.7

According to the Hebrew requirement that a prophecy must have a 100 percent rate of accuracy, the true Messiah of Israel must fulfill them all or else he is not the Messiah. So the question that either vindicates Jesus or makes him culpable for the world’s greatest hoax is, did he fit and fulfill these Old Testament prophecies?

Professor of mathematics Peter Stoner gave 600 students a math probability problem that would determine the odds for one person fulfilling eight specific prophecies. (This is not the same as flipping a coin eight times in a row and getting heads each time.) First the students calculated the odds of one person fulfilling all the conditions of one specific prophecy, such as being betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver. Then the students did their best to estimate the odds for all of the eight prophecies combined.

The students calculated that the odds against one person fulfilling all eight prophecies are astronomical—one in 1021.

To illustrate that number, Stoner gave the following example: “First, blanket the entire Earth land mass with silver dollars 120 feet high. Second, specially mark one of those dollars and randomly bury it. Third, ask a person to travel the Earth and select the marked dollar, while blindfolded, from the trillions of other dollars.”8

When forensic scientists discover a DNA profile match, the odds of having the wrong person is frequently less than one in several billion (something for deviants to keep in mind). It would seem we are in the same neighborhood of odds, and numbers of zeros, in considering a single individual fulfilling these prophecies.
Prophets can be rather mystical, meta-physical and —for lack of a better word— creepy. It conjures up images of sages and seers who can predict the future. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in prophecy, and many people believe that they can communicate with God or other spiritual entities to receive messages about the future. However, the accuracy of these prophecies is often questionable, and many people are skeptical of their validity.

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Let’s take a look at two of the specific prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament.

You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past. (Micah 5:2)

The Lord himself will choose a sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel—“God is with us.” (Isaiah 7:14)

Now, before considering the other 59 prophecies, you have to stop and ask yourself how many people in the category of potential Messiah throughout history were born in a small village in the land of Israel? The answer is 0. Therefore, the odds are incredibly high that Jesus is the Messiah.

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People can do some pretty outlandish things with numbers (especially with a last name like that), so it’s important to note that Stoner’s work was reviewed by the American Scientific Association, which stated, “The mathematical analysis ... is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound, and Professor Stoner has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way.”

With that as an introduction, let’s add six more predictions to the two we’ve already considered, giving us a total of Professor Stoner’s eight:

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The eight prophecies we’ve reviewed about the Messiah were written by men from different times and places between about 500 and 1,000 years before Jesus was born. Thus there was no opportunity for collusion among them. Notice too, the specificity. This is not the genre of a Nostradamus prediction—“When the moon turns green, the lima bean will lie cloaked by the roadside.”

And over the years a similar claim has been made by skeptics about Jesus’ fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. They have granted that Jesus fulfilled messianic prophecies but have accused him of living his life in such a way as to intentionally fulfill them. A reasonable objection, but not as plausible as it might seem.

Consider the nature of just four of the messianic prophecies:

- His lineage would come from David (Jeremiah 23:5).
- His birth would occur in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
- He would migrate to Egypt (Hosea 11:1).
- He would live in Nazareth (Isaiah 11:1).

Now, what could Jesus do about fulfilling these prophecies? Neither he nor his parents had any control over his ancestry. His birth in Bethlehem was the result of a census mandated by Caesar Augustus. His parents’ move to Egypt was prompted by King Herod’s persecution. And once Herod died, Jesus’ parents naturally decided to resettled in Nazareth.

Even if at a young age an impostor Jesus looked at the prophecies he had accidentally fulfilled and decided to go for it and see if he could make the rest (like someone deciding to shoot the moon in the card game Hearts), the deck would still have been impossibly stacked against him. Consider some of the factors in the prophecies we’ve already looked at: the Messiah would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver; he would be killed by means of crucifixion; and people would cast lots for his clothes. These prophecies all came true for Jesus, yet what control did he have over the fulfillment of any of them?

Bible scholars tell us that nearly 300 references to specific prophecies of the Messiah were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The odds against one person fulfilling so many prophecies would be beyond all mathematical possibility. It could never happen, no matter how much time was allotted. One mathematician’s estimate of those impossible odds is “one chance in a trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion.”

Bertrand Russell, atheist, was asked in a Look magazine interview what evidence it would take for him to believe in God. Russell responded, “Well, if I heard a voice from heaven and it predicted a series of impossible events, I might get convinced.”

Two conclusions emerge: First, only a transcendent Being could orchestrate such events. And second, it makes all of Jesus’ other claims credible and worthy of serious consideration.
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Bible scholar Norman Geisler responded to Russell’s skepticism. “I’d say, Mr. Russell, there has been a voice from heaven; it has predicted many things, and we’ve seen them undeniable come to pass.”

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**PROOF JAR**

We’ve looked at the evidence for Jesus’ fulfillment of messianic prophecies from every angle but one. What if the Christian scriptures who copied scrolls of Isaiah and the other Old Testament prophetic books altered them to make them correspond to Jesus’ life? This is a question many scholars and skeptics have asked. And it seems possible, even attractive. It would prevent us from making books altered them to make them correspond to Jesus’ life? who copied scrolls of Isaiah and the other Old Testament prophetic books altered them to make them correspond to Jesus’ life?

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As a result, even scholars who deny Jesus as the Messiah accept that Jesus Christ even lived. And they are virtual duplicates of time world would have been highly unlikely, and it would explain the amazing accuracy of his fulfillment of prophecies. So, how do we know that the Old Testament prophetic books, such as Isaiah, Daniel, and Micah, were written hundreds of years before Christ, as purported? And if they were, how do we know Christians didn’t alter the texts later?

For 1,900 years, many skeptics held fast to that theory, based upon the human impossibility of accurately predicting future events. But then something occurred that doused all enthusiasm for the theory. Something called the Dead Sea Scrolls.

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As a result, even scholars who deny Jesus as the Messiah accept these manuscripts of the Old Testament as having predated his birth and therefore concede that the prophecies about the Messiah contained within them have not been altered in order to conform to Jesus.

If these predictions were fulfilled so accurately through the life of Jesus, it seems logical to wonder why everyone in Israel would not have been able to see it. But as his crucifixion attests, not everyone did see it. As the apostle John said of Jesus, “Even in his own land and among his own people, he was not accepted” (John 1:11). Why?

Considering the embattled history of Israel, it is not difficult to read into the definition of Messiah the idea of a political freedom fighter. It is understandable how a first-century Jewish person might think, How could the Messiah have come and Israel still be oppressed under Roman occupation?

While Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies, he did so in ways that no one was expecting. He sought a moral and spiritual revolution, not a political one, accomplishing his objectives through self-sacrifice and humble service, healing and teaching. Meanwhile, Israel was looking for another Moses or Joshua who would lead them in a conquist to recover their lost kingdom.

Of course, many Jews of Jesus’ day did recognize him as the Messiah—the entire foundation of the Christian church being Jewish. The majority, however, did not. And it’s not so hard to comprehend why.

To better understand the first-century Jews’ misunderstanding, consider this messianic prophecy written 700 years before the birth of Jesus by the prophet Isaiah. Was it referring to Jesus?

All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.

He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the abuser, he did not open his mouth. From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people realizing that he was dying for their sins—that he was suffering their punishment? He had done no wrong, and he never deceived anyone. But he was hauled like a criminal, he was put in a rich man’s grave.

But it was the Lord’s good plan to crush him and fill him with grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have a multitude of children, many heirs….

And because of what he has experienced, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. (Portions of Isaiah 53:6-11)

As Jesus hung on the cross, some understandably may have been thinking, How could this be the Messiah? At the same time, others may have been wondering, Who else but Jesus could Isaiah be talking about?

**POSSIBLE IMPOSTER**

So, what are we to make of Jesus having fulfilled so many prophecies written hundreds of years prior to his birth? Leonardo DiCaprio… I mean, Frank Abagnale might be a good impostor, but even he got caught by the time he was old enough to drink a beer legally.

Jesus doesn’t look anything like a more competent Frank Abagnale. He’s in a different category altogether. No impostor could ever beat such odds as those presented by Hebrew prophecy.

And what does that mean? Two conclusions emerge: First, only a transcendent Being could orchestrate such events. And second, it makes all of Jesus’ other claims credible and worthy of serious consideration.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus made the claim, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Overwhelming evidence seems to indicate that the signature on that check is not a forgery.
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**The Path Laid by Prophets**

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Half a century back, the finding of the Dead Sea scrolls provided Bible scholars with copies of Old Testament books that were far older than any others known to exist. Extensive tests proved that many of these copies were made before Jesus Christ even lived. And they are virtually identical to the texts of the Bible we were already using.

As a result, even scholars who deny Jesus as the Messiah accept these manuscripts of the Old Testament as having predicted his birth and therefore concede that the prophecies about the Messiah contained within them have not been altered in order to conform to Jesus.

So, what are we to make of Jesus having fulfilled so many prophecies written hundreds of years prior to his birth? Leonardo DiCaprio... I mean, Frank Abagnale might be a good imposter, but even he got caught by the time he was old enough to drink a beer legally. Jesus doesn’t look anything like a more competent Frank Abagnale. He’s in a different category altogether. No imposter could ever beat such odds as those presented by Hebrew prophecy.

And what does that mean? Two conclusions emerge. First, only a transcendent Being could orchestrate such events. And second, it makes all of Jesus’ other claims credible and worthy of serious consideration.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus made the claim, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Overwhelming evidence seems to indicate that the signature on that check is not a forgery.

**Endotes**

3 Prediction 3, Quantam 2, 28.
4 McDowell, Ibid.
5 Quoted in McDowell, 12-13.
6 McDowell, 164-193.
8 Stoner, S.
9 The Hebrew word netzer, appearing in Isaiah 11:1, is believed by many to refer to Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown.
11 Quoted in Strobel, 144.

**IMPOSSIBLE**

11 Quoted in Strobel, 141.