

Thus it is written...

Although Archbishop Fulton Sheen lived in a different time period than ours, he had to deal with the same questions that our modern world struggles with, that many of our young adults struggle with. There are so many other religions out there, so how do we know that Christianity is true?"

These are certainly valid questions, but Archbishop Sheen pointed to an unique characteristic that no other religious leader possessed: **Christ was pre-announced**. Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, and Joseph Smith did not fulfill any prophecy nor did were they foretold. Whereas Jesus fulfilled **hundreds** prophecies! Some of them were written several centuries even millennia before his coming. Christianity is true because it was **foretold AND fulfilled**.

Our readings want to emphasize that not only was the coming of Christ prophesized, but even his death was foretold.

We hear from the lips of Peter: *"what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled"* (Acts 3:18)

This was likely what he heard from Jesus too: *"These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."* ⁴⁵ *Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."* (Lk 24:44-45)

What prophecies did he refer to? How did he open their minds? Did they record it on Blu-ray or DVD? This was the best bible study of all time and all we get is a sentence!

There are many prophecies we could study together such as the ones we hear on Good Friday. We've heard many of these prophecies but I want to focus on an amazing prophecy that not too many people have heard. The Book of the Prophet Daniel not only prophesizes that the Christ would suffer but also when he would suffer and die.

The kingdom once united under David had been separated after the death of his son Solomon. The ten northern tribes of Israel were eventually attacked by Assyria in 722 BC. The tribe of Judah and Benjamin remained but they were

eventually attacked and the first exiles were sent to Babylon in 605 BC. Jeremiah had prophesized that Judah would be in exile for 70 years.

So, Daniel who was in exile in Babylon and seeing how those 70 years were coming to a close began praying to God, 'It is because of our sins that we have been exiled from Jerusalem, but may your mercy allow us to return to our homeland.' Once he makes that prayer to God, the angel Gabriel comes to him to give him a word about the future:

²⁴ *"Seventy weeks of years are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness"* (Dan 9:24)

How much is seventy weeks of years? 490 years. So when does this period of 490 years begin?

It begins when *"the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem"* (Dan 9:25) and this period will end when *"an anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing"* (Dan 9:26). So the 490 years would begin when Jerusalem is allowed to be rebuilt and it would end with the coming of a "messiah" who would be cut off, i.e., put to death.

Some scholars would say that the restoration of Jerusalem began around ca. 457 BC when the Persian king, Artaxerxes, ordered Jerusalem to be rebuilt. So if we add 490 years to 457 BC, what do we get? That brings us to 33 AD when the anointed one, the messiah would be cut off.

"[Daniel] did not only prophesy future events, as did the other prophets, but he also determined the time at which these events would come to pass (Josephus, Antiquities, 10.267-68)"

The 490 years have passed and the messiah who was cut off, Jesus the Christ, has put an end to sin, atoned for iniquity and brought everlasting righteousness. Jesus has fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament through his resurrection because if he has not risen from the dead then our faith is in vain and we are still stuck in our sins (cf. 1 Cor 15:17). Christianity is true because it has been foretold and fulfilled. Therefore, let us be confident in the truth of our faith in the midst of a secular world so that the world may know that our firm hope is in the true and living God.