



Lesson 9: Evidence for the Inspiration of the Bible

Fulfilled Prophecy

FULFILLED PROPHECY AS EVIDENCE

The prophecies contained in Scripture comprise some of the most solid evidence there is for the inspiration of the Bible. Although Peter was certain about the identity of Christ because he was an eyewitness of “His majesty”, he indicates that the prophetic word is even stronger evidence (2 Peter 1:16-21).

The Bible foretells future events with complete accuracy, often hundreds of years before the events occur. In most cases, it can be proven that the texts containing the prophecies were written long before the occurrence of the events they predict. Only our all-knowing, eternal God has the ability to “declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, things that are not yet done” (Isaiah 46:9-10; 42:9). False gods, soothsayers and astrologers have no such power (Isaiah 41:23-24). The fact that the Bible is filled with accurate prophecies demonstrates that it is a product of the mind of God.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING NATIONS & KINGS

- **Babylonian Captivity.** Over 100 years before it happened, Isaiah prophesied that Babylon would conquer Jerusalem and take its royal children and riches into captivity (Isaiah 39:5-7; Daniel 1:1-3; 2 Chronicles 36:18).
- **Return from Captivity.** Long before Cyrus was born, the Scriptures identify him as the Persian king who would allow Israel to return from captivity (Isa. 44:28; Ezra 1:1-2).
- **Successive World Empires.** Daniel 2 correctly prophesies concerning the rise of four successive world kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. It also indicates that the kingdom of the Messiah would be established in the days of the last of these kingdoms.
- **Alexander the Great.** Although Alexander the Great is not mentioned by name in the Bible, he is definitely the subject of a number of Bible prophecies, particularly in Daniel chapters 8 & 11.
 - Daniel 8:1-8, 19-22 prophesies that the king of Greece would conquer Medo-Persia and that his empire would then be divided into four kingdoms.
 - These prophecies were made BEFORE the time of Alexander! He actually read them! The Jewish historian Josephus records that “when the book of Daniel was showed to him (Alexander the Great) wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended.” (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11.8.5).
 - Alexander’s empire was divided between four victorious princes, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander, and Lysimachus
 - The prophecy against Tyre in Ezekiel 26:3-5 was fulfilled in detail by Alexander during his campaign through Palestine in 332 BC. The city was left barren like the

top of a rock, and it became a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea.

PROPHECIES ABOUT ISRAEL

The Old Testament contains hundreds of prophecies concerning the nation of Israel, all of which came to pass. To illustrate, notice a few prophecies from Deuteronomy 28.

- Israel would have a king (v. 36).
- Israel would serve other gods, be in bondage and go into captivity (vs. 36, 41)
- Israel's cities would be besieged and great sufferings would result (vs. 52-57, cf. Lamentations 2:20, 4:10; 2 Kings 6:24ff).
- Israel would be scattered from one end of the earth to another but always remain an identifiable people (vs. 64-67, cf. Jeremiah 5:18-19; 30:11; 46:28).

PROPHECIES ABOUT CHRIST

There are well over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Christ. His lineage, place of birth, manner of life, ministry of miracles and parables, betrayal and crucifixion are all subjects of prophecy. Here are a few examples of Messianic prophecies to consider:

- The place of Christ's birth was foretold in about 700 BC (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1).
- The Messiah would enter Jerusalem as King riding on a colt (Zech. 9:9; John 12:12-15).
- He would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver which would be "cast to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zechariah 11:12-13; Matthew 26:15; 27:5-7).
- He was to be wounded and bruised, silent before His accusers, killed with thieves, buried with the rich, etc. (Isaiah 53:4-12; Matthew 27:12, 38, 57-60).
- His hands and feet were to be pierced, yet not a bone broken; they would cast lots for his clothing (Psalm 22:1, 16-18).

The odds of everything that was prophesied about the Messiah coming true *by chance* are unbelievably small. "The chance of one man fulfilling even eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power (1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000) This has been illustrated by imagining placing 100,000,000,000,000,000 silver dollars on the State of Texas which would result in a sea of silver two feet deep wherever you tread! Now is where the odds get interesting. Mark one of the silver dollars distinctively and throw it into the state. Stir it all up and blindfold a man who has one pick to select the marked coin. That's the odds against anyone fulfilling only 8 prophecies, much less what most authorities feel is something like 330 plus Old Testament prophecies in some way fulfilled in the Messiah." (via Precept Austin)

QUESTIONS OVER FULFILLED PROPHECY

1. Why is fulfilled prophecy even stronger evidence for us today than miracles?
2. Which king of Judah was told that the treasures of his household and some of his descendents would be carried into Babylonian captivity? (Isaiah 39:5-7).
About how many years passed before this prophecy was fulfilled?
3. Give two prophecies that are made about Greece in Daniel 8.

What do you think the chances would be of someone living in 1775 predicting that in 300 years the United States of America would be the one world superpower?

4. If you had to pick the single most impressive prophecy and fulfillment concerning Christ, which would it be? Why?