

THE BIBLE AND MODERN SCIENCE

By

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CHAPTER FIVE -

Fulfilled Prophecies

THE GREATEST DEMONSTRABLE EVIDENCE for the inspiration of the Scriptures, apart from the final, unanswerable proof of personal experience, lies in the fact that hundreds of prophecies contained in its pages have been remarkably fulfilled.

In attempting to refute the evidence from predictive prophecy, critics have gone to absurd lengths.

They have sought to explain away the fulfillments as coincidence, or have arbitrarily set the dates of the writing of the prophecies as subsequent to their fulfillment, or in most cases have simply ignored them. These attempts, however, have always been based on a process of rationalization rather than on demonstrable fact and, for the most part, have met utter defeat.

Bible prophecies are not vague and rambling, as is almost always true of certain supposed extra-Biblical prophecies, such as those of Mother Shipton, Nostradamus, and others of like kind.

Rather they deal with specific places, people, and events, and their specific fulfillment can easily be checked by reference to subsequent history.

For example, consider the prophecy against that great city of antiquity, Tyre of the Phoenicians. It is found in Ezekiel 26, and first describes the coming capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar (verses 7-11). This was later fulfilled quite literally.

However, the judgment forecast in verses 4, 5: "**They shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea,**" seemed unfulfilled.

History tells us that most of the people of Tyre escaped with their valuables to an island half a mile from the shore, where they built a new Tyre which was still great and powerful for almost 250 years. But finally Alexander the Great finished what Nebuchadnezzar had begun. In his campaign of conquest through the East, the people of Tyre refused to surrender to him, and he seemingly had no way to reach the island city to capture it. However, he devised the ingenious plan of building a causeway from the mainland. The Macedonians then literally "scraped the dust" of the old mainland city and ". . . laid her stones and timber and dust in the midst of the water" (verse 12) to build the causeway. (Note the change from the "he," Nebuchadnezzar, in verse 11 to "they" in verse 12, indicating different conquerors.) The causeway was thus built from the remains of the old city and the island city was captured and sacked. Verse 21 says: "**I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more; though thou be sought for, yet shalt**

thou never be found again, saith the Lord God." The mainland city of Tyre, against which the prophecy was directed, was never rebuilt. There are not even ruins or mounds to mark the spot, which can only be approximately located from the writing of ancient historians. The causeway and island now form a desolate peninsula, which is used only by fishermen, for the purpose of "spreading their nets" for drying.

Tyre's sister city of Sidon had the following prophecy uttered against her: "**Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon . . . for I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side**" (Ezekiel 28:22, 23). No fate of extinction was foretold for Sidon and even today it is a city of about 20,000. However, it has had one of the bloodiest histories any city ever had. It was almost destroyed by the Persians, was the scene of many fierce battles during the Crusades, and during the wars between the Druses and the Turks, and later between the Turks and the French. In 1840, Sidon was again the scene of bloodshed when it was bombarded by the fleets of three nations.

Two sister cities, close together and equal in importance, were thus the subjects of two very different prophecies. Each has been fulfilled to the letter. That would have been impossible except as directed by GOD, who alone knows "**the end from the beginning.**"

Many other cities have been singled out by the prophets. We could not begin to discuss here the detailed fulfillment of all these predictions. However, some of the cities and the corresponding prophecies are listed below for the reader's reference:

Thebes, Egypt (The "No" of Scripture), Ezekiel 30:14-16.
Memphis, Egypt (The "Noph" of Scripture), Ezekiel 30:13.
Ashkelon, Philistia, Zechariah 9:5.
Ekron, Philistia. Also Gaza, Philistia, Zephaniah 2:4.
Bethel, Amos 3:14,15.
Samaria, Micah 1:6,7.
Jericho, Joshua 6:26.
Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, Matthew 11:20-23.
Babylon, Isaiah 13:19-22.

All these and many other prophecies directed against specific cities either have been or are being fulfilled with meticulous accuracy.

Many countries also have been the subject of prophecy.

Edom, or Idumea, was a nation that was located next to the Jews in Palestine.

Although the Edomites were descended from Esau and were thus related to the Israelites, they were extremely idolatrous and treacherous and were constantly warring with the Hebrew nation. Their land was very rugged and their capital city, Petra, had a seemingly impregnable position in the rocks of the mountains. It was a very great and rich city, being the terminus of one of the great trade routes of the East; and even today its ruined buildings and palaces, carved out of the solid rock, are most imposing and magnificent. But in Ezekiel 35:3-9; Jeremiah 49:16-18, and other places, there were predictions of the ultimate overthrow of Edom. Edom was to be an utter

desolation; her trade was to cease, and all her inhabitants were to disappear. For many centuries after they were written these prophecies remained in the Scriptures without being fulfilled. Even for some 600 years after CHRIST, Edom and Petra remained great and prosperous. But somehow, sometime, a change came. Seemingly no one knows the story. Now the whole land of Edom, as far as the city of Maan, is utterly desolate, with practically no human inhabitants, and very little animal life. It is interesting that only Maan, a town on the east of Edom and the Teman of Scripture, has escaped the desolation. But this is precisely what was predicted in Ezekiel 25:13: "**I will make it a desolation from Teman.**"

A similar judgment of perpetual extinction was predicted for the Philistines, another great and warlike people of antiquity.

They lived west of the Israelites, on the seacoast, and were almost constantly fighting with them. It was from the Philistines that much of the Jewish trouble with idolatry was derived. Consequently, we have the prophecy in Zephaniah 2:5, 6: ". . . **the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.**" There are several other similar prophecies against the Philistines, including some directed against specific Philistine cities, as noted before. As late as the twelfth century of our era the country still was strong and had many strong cities. Now, however, all the inhabitants and the cities of Philistia are gone. The country is used entirely for agriculture and sheep raising.

The nation of Egypt, on the other hand, was not doomed to extinction, as were Babylonia, Edom, Philistia, and others.

Egypt was one of the greatest powers of the ancient world, but in passage after passage of Scripture, she was threatened with a gradual and permanent decline, but not with extinction. Ezekiel 29:15 says: "**It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.**" Today that prophecy still stands unchallenged. The kingdom, so-called, still exists; the people of Egypt today are the direct descendants of those who were at one time the greatest people in the world. Yet it is truly the basest of kingdoms and has no more exalted itself above the nations. There are a great many other predictions regarding Egypt, concerning such miscellaneous details as its industries, the weavers, the fisheries, the papyrus plants, the rivers and canals, its rulers, its exploitation by outsiders, the desolation of the country, etc. These have every one been fulfilled in a most marvelous way.

We have not the space to discuss more of these predictions here, but should mention that such countries as Moab, Ammon, Chaldea, Assyria, Ethiopia, and others are the subjects of Biblical prophecies, all of which have been fulfilled.

We should consider briefly the Jewish people, however.

Their entire history has been foretold in the Bible in a very great number of prophecies, most of which have already been fulfilled.

In Deuteronomy 28, even before the Israelites had entered the promised land, Moses predicted

their future happiness in the land, their sufferings and punishments for disobedience, and finally their great world-wide dispersion. In chapter 30, he promised their eventual return, a prophecy which seemed impossible 30 years ago, but which is now being marvelously fulfilled.

Their dispersion was prophesied by many others, including CHRIST Himself, as well as the terrible persecution that would be theirs in all nations. But it was also revealed that they would not be destroyed or assimilated but their national identity would be retained. Today the Jew himself stands as one of the most remarkable testimonies of all to the truth of the Word of GOD.

The Book of Daniel contains what are usually regarded as the most marvelous prophecies in the Bible. In chapters 2, 7, 8, and 11 of this book, the entire history of the world is foretold, from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the end. The careers of Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, Egypt, Syria, and Rome are described with such wealth of description and detail that no one acquainted with the facts of history can be uncertain as to the events and nations referred to.

This very minuteness of detail is the sole remaining crutch of the critical school which has long contended that the Book of Daniel was written after those events had transpired. The rationalism of the critics rules out the miracle of predictive prophecy; so this contention is absolutely necessary for them. Although it must be admitted that they still cling to it as a matter of necessity, it has been almost irrefutably proved, as shown in the preceding chapter, that the book is authentic both as to date and author, and thus its marvelous prophecies stand completely vindicated.

One of the most remarkable of all prophecies is found in Daniel 9:24-26, known as the prophecy of the 70 weeks. This prophecy was given to Daniel through the angel Gabriel, revealing the future history of his people Israel, including the exact time of the coming of the promised Messiah (CHRIST). It was given about 540 B.C., while Israel was in captivity in Babylon, with the city of Jerusalem and the great temple of GOD in ruins. Daniel was told that prophetic time would begin again for Israel when a command was given to rebuild Jerusalem. This command was given by Artaxerxes to Nehemiah in 445 B.C. (Nehemiah 2:5-8).

From this date, the prophecy indicated that 483 years (i.e., 69 "weeks," literally "sevens," meaning seven-year periods) would elapse until the coming of Messiah as Prince of Israel. Allowing for errors in our present system of chronology (JESUS was actually born about 5 B.C.) and for possible use of a prophetic year of 360 days instead of an actual solar year, it is obvious that this period culminates at about the time of the public ministry of CHRIST.

In fact, Sir Robert Anderson and others have shown that, with certain reasonable assumptions, its fulfillment occurred on the very day that CHRIST for the first time accepted and encouraged His recognition as King of Israel, the day of His so-called "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem, a week before His rejection and crucifixion. Later, weeping over His rejection by His people, He said: **"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."**

The prophecy also foretold that after His coming He would be "cut off," and would "have nothing."

That is, He would be rejected as King by Israel, and this was of course, exactly what happened. Certain other portions of this great prophecy have apparently not yet been fulfilled, but are awaiting CHRIST's return and the full establishment of His kingdom for their final development and realization.

There are many other prophecies relating to the coming of CHRIST, possibly not as striking as this but just as miraculous. His virgin birth was predicted in Isaiah 7:14. His birthplace in Bethlehem was given in Micah 5:2. Zechariah 9:9, 10 describes His public entry into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass.

Many details of His teaching and healing ministries are given in various prophecies. His betrayal is described, including even the price of thirty pieces of silver, in Zechariah 11:12, 13. The details of the crucifixion are most graphically portrayed in Psalm 22, written by David at a time when offenders were killed by stoning and crucifixion was unheard of, being a distinctively Roman method of punishment. The purpose of His death, as well as several of the details of His trial, suffering on the cross, and His burial are foretold in Isaiah 53.

The fact that He died, not for Himself or anything that He had done, but as a substitute for our sins, is most vividly described here. Even the resurrection is indicated in several places in the Old Testament, as well as being foretold several times by JESUS Himself.

There are more than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament which were fulfilled by CHRIST at His first coming. In an attempt to determine the scientific significance of these prophetic fulfillments, a California mathematician, Professor Peter Stoner, made an interesting experiment with one of his classes. Each member of the class was assigned a particular Messianic prophecy for study, with the purpose of determining the statistical chance that the particular event could have been predicted without supernatural inspiration. For example, the prophecy in Micah 5:2 says that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. There was no more reason for this town to be chosen than any other town in Israel. Therefore its probability of chance fulfillment would be one divided by the number of towns in Israel at the time. In this manner, probabilities of fulfillment were determined for each of 48 Messianic prophecies.

Now the laws of mathematical probability show that the probability of several chance occurrences, independent of each other, being accomplished simultaneously is the product of the probabilities of all the individual occurrences. Thus the probability of all these 48 prophecies being fulfilled simultaneously in one individual, the promised Messiah and Saviour, was calculated as the product of all the separate probabilities. Professor Stoner found that the resultant probability was one chance out of a number that would be written as one, followed by 181 zeros.

To realize the significance of this tremendous number, visualize a huge ball composed of solidly packed electrons. These are the smallest entities we know anything about; it would take about 25 million billion of them to make a line one inch long. The largest thing we know anything about is our physical universe, some four billion light years in diameter (a light-year being the distance light travels in a year, moving at the speed of over 186,000 miles per second). However, our ball of electrons must have a diameter some 500 quadrillion times as great as the diameter of our universe.

One of these electrons now is marked to distinguish it from all the rest, and then the entire mass stirred and mixed thoroughly. A blindfolded man is then sent into the ball to find the marked electron. The chance that he would select the right electron on the first trial is roughly equivalent to the chance that these 48 prophecies could have been fulfilled without supernatural inspiration.

All of which amounts to clear mathematical proof that the Scriptures must have been divinely inspired.

Most scientific laws have been established on the basis of statistical probabilities far less imposing than the above.

And it must be remembered that these represented only 48 out of more than 300 Messianic prophecies, and also that there are still hundreds of other fulfilled prophecies in the Bible.

Surely a right-thinking person must conclude that truly the Bible is the very Word of GOD. Such phenomena as these are found in no other book in all the world. There is another significant set of prophecies which are excitingly being fulfilled in these days before our very eyes. These prophecies describe conditions in the world shortly before the promised return of the LORD JESUS CHRIST to this earth, "**in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**" (II Thessalonians 1:8).

Perhaps the most significant of these "**signs of the times**" is the restoration of Israel to her own ancient land, as a recognized nation among nations. This amazing restoration, with a large number of its details, was promised in many passages of the Bible as an event that would occur in the last days of this age. (See, for example, Isaiah 11:10-12; Jeremiah 23:3-8; 30:3-11; Ezekiel 20:34-38; 36:24-35; 37:11-28; and numerous others.) Of course, the complete fulfillment of such passages as these awaits a great coming divine judgment on Israel and her national conversion to CHRIST when He returns to earth to reign (Zechariah 12:10-14:11, and other passages).

Other important prophetic portents of the last days include the following:

Rapid increase of science, communication, and travel (Daniel 12:4).

General moral and spiritual deterioration (II Timothy 3:1-7, 12,13.)

Doctrinal apostasy of religious leaders (I Timothy 4:1-3; II Peter 2:1,2; II Timothy 4:3, 4).

Antisupernaturalism among intellectual leaders (II Peter 3:3-6; II Timothy 3:5).

Conflicts between capitalistic and laboring classes (James 5:1-8).

Preparations for world government and world religion (Revelation 13:7,8).

Widespread materialism and secularism (Luke 17:26-30; 18:8).

Intermittent outbreaks of world-wide wars, famines, and diseases (Luke 21:10,11).

The above prophecies and many others are being fulfilled in these present days, and the conditions they describe appear to become more serious with each passing day.

Evidently, as both Scripture and current history plainly teach, world conditions will become increasingly perilous and anti-Christian as the return of the Lord draws near.

However, there is one other prophecy of the latter times that is entirely different in character,

namely, that the Gospel will be preached as a witness to all nations before the end comes (Acts 1:8-11; Matthew 24:14; II Peter 3:9-15).

Although there are some lands where the Gospel has not yet really been preached, there has been a tremendous extension of evangelical Christian missions in recent generations. The Bible has been translated, at least in part, into more than 1,120 tongues to date. A number of mission boards are concentrating particularly on reaching hitherto unevangelized areas and tribes. Modern inventions such as the radio and airplane are contributing significantly to world evangelization, which seems well within the possibility of accomplishment in this generation.

By doing all within our personal power to aid in the cause of world missions, it seems that we can actually speed the fulfillment of this prophecy, and thus hasten "**the coming of the day of God**" (II Peter 3:12).

Thus, as the world deteriorates and ripens for judgment, the Gospel of CHRIST is nevertheless being taken to the ends of the earth.

And all of these things both add to the tremendous evidences of the truth of Scripture and of the Christian faith, and also prove that the coming of the LORD JESUS must be very near!

For any reader who does not yet know the joy and assurance of personal salvation, may the author urge him with all his heart to receive the LORD JESUS by faith as Son of GOD and personal SAVIOUR, committing his life and soul fully to Him. "**For GOD so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life**" (John 3:16).

"**Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation**" (II Cor. 6:2).

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