

# The Bible And Prophecy

Growing In Gospel Living: Shelf 2 — Volume 18

In **Isaiah 41:22** God established the true test of any and all who would claim to be divinely inspired:

*“Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them; and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come.”*

In **Isaiah 46:9,10** God applied this same test to Himself: *“Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other ... declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done.”*

Two major arguments that forcefully prove that the Bible is inspired by God and that Christianity is true are the resurrection of Christ and the fulfillment of prophecy. In this course we will consider **the powerful evidence of the fulfillment of prophecy**. The description of events and activities of nations and peoples years in advance of their actual happening **is the true proof of divine inspiration**.

Prophecy  
Proves  
Divine  
Inspiration.

## ↳ Understanding The Prophets ↳

It is as James Orr wrote in his famous book, *Revelation and Inspiration*: *“Prophecy is a phenomenon peculiar to Israel,”* wrote James Orr.<sup>1:88</sup> False religions abound with predictions of the future. However, the numerous unfulfilled predictions of their history clearly manifests that these religions are really false religions. Bernard Ramm stated such in his book, *Protestant Christian Evidences*: *“Prophecy is not part of the very fiber of non-Christian religions, and is believed because the system is already be-*

lieved.” 2:84 And again, Orr was correct when he wrote,

But in Israel alone we have the spectacle of a succession of men, speaking with full consciousness in the name of a holy and righteous God, maintaining a lofty and continuous testimony to His will and purpose, and, amidst the greatest revolutions in outward affairs, unerringly interpreting His providence in its bearing on the ends of His Kingdom—testimony and prediction finding their fulfillment in the advent, work, and spiritual Kingdom of the New Testament Redeemer. 1:88

**Prophecy is at the center of the Christian faith. If the Bible were not a book of prophecy and fulfillment, then there would be no foundation upon which the Christian’s faith could be founded.**

- T or F:** If prophecy were not a central part of Christian faith, then Christianity would simply be another religion of man.
- T or F:** Christians could still be saved for eternity regardless of Jesus fulfilling any prophecy that is recorded in the Bible.

## ↩ The True Prophet Of God ↩

The Greek word for “prophet” means “to announce” or “to forth-tell.” The prophet was a forth-teller of God’s will and wishes, that is, he preached the word of God. However, his forth-telling often involved **foretelling**. In his book, *General Biblical Interpretation*, H. S. Miller explained: “He [the prophet] had insight as well as foresight; he was an inspired, infallible, authoritative teacher of God’s will.” 3:18

**Prophets  
Were God’s  
Spokesmen  
On Earth.**

The prophet was both preacher and fore-teller of future events. As the teacher of Israel, the prophet often used prophecy to prove that he was from God, and thus an instructor of the people to keep them focused on God in the future.

**In the Old Testament, the prophet was God’s authoritative spokesman on earth.** His work often involved certain declarations of future events, especially those events that directly affected the people of God. The work of prophecy was primarily preaching. Nevertheless, this preaching often included the foretelling of future events.

**There is a difference between the predictions of self-made prophets and the true prophecies of ancient prophets of God.** It is as Foy E. Wallace stated, *“In prediction there are circumstances in existence upon which we may base a premise and from that premise draw a conclusion.”* <sup>4:61</sup> Most prophecies of the Bible involve circumstances and events far removed from the prophet. There were no clues or hints on which the prophet could base his prophecy. Essentially, **a prophecy of future events was a miracle.**

On the other hand, **a prediction is based on present clues of which the individual is aware.** These clues indicate that something will happen. The religious world never seems to lack those who would seek to deceive others by their predictions of the future. This is especially true in times of international turmoil. The one who seeks to predict usually pronounces general statements concerning the future. However, the true prophet of God gave specifics.

Prophecy  
Is Not  
Prediction.

When a generic pronouncement of the predictionist comes true, we would certainly be naive to compare this “fulfillment” with the fulfillments of true prophets of God as they are recorded in the Bible. Everyone can anticipate, and thus, predict the future. There are those who are more talented at this than others because their sense of awareness of current events is better perceived by the predictionist. However, the guesswork of a predictionist would not be something upon which we would ever base our faith. Doing such would be placing our faith in man and not in God.

As in the case of miracles, there were always specific reasons for which God manifested Himself through miracles. **There were also specific purposes for which God allowed the prophets to voice events of the future.** Understanding the purpose of prophecy, therefore, helps us understand the fallacy of modern-day prognosticators who would presume to be prophets of God.

There are many people who are skilled in the art of predicting future events, but all predictions are based on present events, and their natural historical outcome.

3. **T or F:** No person could prophesy the future if he or she were not inspired by the Holy Spirit.
4. **T or F:** The word “prediction” is another word that can be used to explain a true prophecy.

## ↪ The Purpose Of Prophecy ↪

The pronouncement and fulfillment of prophecy is a key theme of major texts of the Bible. Because of this we can assume that God considers prophecy to be a strong proof for the divine inspiration of the Bible. There is purpose behind God’s pronouncements of future things. Here are some of those purposes that stood and stand behind God’s use of prophecy in the past to prove His presence in the lives of those who made pronouncements concerning the future.

### A. Prophecy Proved God’s Presence

In Isaiah 42:9 God reminded Israel that the things that He had prophesied concerning the future had come to pass. In the same breath He said that He would tell them of things yet to come: **“Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”** Because no person on his own could do such a thing as this, Israel concluded that one was a true prophet because of the fulfillment of his prophecies.

**Only a supernatural power (God) would be able to declare future events.** The Bible claims and proves by its own declaration of future things that only God could be its author (Is 44:6-8). God is willing to rest the case of His presence on the fulfillment of His prophecy (Is 48:3-5). At the same time, He has set forth the work of prophecy as the true test of those who would claim to speak for Him. In other words, God allows the predictionists to make their claims

Fulfilled Prophecy  
Is Evidence That  
The Bible  
Is The Word Of God.

concerning future things. However, when the claims of the false prophets do not come to pass, then God asks us to discard such masqueraders from being His supposed messengers. They are false prophets, and thus, to be rejected, and by rejected we meant ignored.

**All prophecy came by revelation of God through the Holy Spirit** (2 Pt 1:20,21; Lk 1:70). Prophecy and fulfillment are so interwoven throughout the entire Bible that one would certainly be inconsistent to

All The Bible  
Is Inspired,  
But All The Bible  
Is Not Revelation.

accept part of the Bible as inspired and at the same time reject other portions as uninspired. One cannot accept those sections of the Bible that contain prophecy, and at the same time reject those sections that contain the fulfillments of prophecy. Hulen Jackson once wrote,

If you believe the New Testament to be the word of God, inspired of Him, then you believe the prophets of Old Testament days did divinely foretell the future with a wisdom they did not learn by study but which came directly from God. <sup>5:307</sup>

**Prophecy is a proof of the divine presence in the Bible and the Bible is proof of divine presence today.**

5. **T or F:** The existence in the text of the Bible prophecies concerning people, nations and events outside the Bible, is proof that the Bible is the inspired word of God.
6. **T or F:** All prophecy came by revelation of God, and was recorded by inspiration.

## B. Prophecy Proved Messengers

Prior to the birth of Israel as a national government, God determined to raise up prophets whose ministry was to declare His word to Israel (See Dt 18:9-22). This He did throughout the history of Israel (See Jr 25:4; 26:5; 2 Ch 36:15,16; Ez 2:3,4). However, in view of the fact that there would be prophets (teachers) among the people, **there had to be proof for the people that one was truly a prophet that was sent from God.** Not every self-proclaimed soothsayer and sage of Israel was to be considered

inspired. Therefore, God declared to His people two major tests by which Israel could determine whether a person was or was not a true prophet. The following two test of a true prophet served as prophetic tests:

## 1. The Harmony Test

The true prophet would prophesy in harmony with the word of God. What was proclaimed had to be according to God's already revealed word to man. Moses wrote,

*If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, "Let us go after other gods" —which you have not known—"and let us serve them," you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.* (See Dt 13:1-5; compare 18:19-22).

Moses reminded Israel that true prophets would speak the word of God. False prophets would speak contrary to the word of God (See Dt 18:19,20). James Orr added, *"In other words, that it [the word of prophecy] cohered with, and did not subvert or contradict, the scheme of revelation so far as it had already gone."* <sup>1:95</sup> If any individual claimed to be a prophet of God, and subsequently uttered things that were contrary to what God had already spoken, then that person was a false prophet. This test of a prophet stands today. **If anyone stands up and proclaims that he or she is prophesying of things to come in the future, but at the same time, teaches things that are contrary to the word of God, then that person is a false prophet.** To be more specific, if one does not know the gospel, and thus does not urge people to obey the gospel, then that person indeed is a false prophet. **Self-pro-**

**Self-Proclaimed Prophets Lie When They Supposedly Prophecy.**

**claimed prophets today should be tested by their knowledge of and obedience to the gospel.**

It is this test of inspiration that makes it easy to identify false prophets. In other words, this test of a prophet did not rest upon the accuracy of the prophecy, but upon the preaching of the prophet. Those who heard the presumptuous prophecy did not have to wait until the supposed prophecy came true. **They could know immediately if the prophet was true by the preached message of the supposed prophet.** If the prophet was not speaking according

**Self-Proclaimed Prophets That Teach Contrary To The Bible Are False.**

to the already revealed word of God, then certainly the presumptuous prophet was not a true prophet. This test of a prophet should be applied to all self-proclaimed prophets today. If those who propose to be prophets today are not teaching the truth, then they are not prophets of God. If they have not been immersed into a covenant relationship with God, then certainly they are not representatives of God (Rm 6:3-6). God would not use anyone who is not a member of the church to be a messenger for the church. Therefore, those who are not immersed believers, and yet claim to be prophets, are deceivers who have set themselves against God. They are masquerading as prophets of God. They fall into the category of those about whom Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12:

*The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

**Those who love the word of God can reject any self-proclaimed modern-day prophet if that supposed prophet has not obeyed the gospel.**

7. **T or F:** If one claimed to be a true prophet of God concerning things in the future, then he or she would have to also claim that the Holy Spirit was directly inspiring his or her prophecies.
8. **T or F:** One could be a true prophet of God, and yet speak things that were contrary to the word of God.
9. **T or F:** One should reject any self-proclaimed prophet if he or she has not obeyed the gospel in baptism.

## 2. The Fulfillment Test

**The prophecy of the true prophet would come to pass.** This is certainly the ultimate test of a true prophet. It is this test that has caused many so-called prophets to be discovered to be false. Jeremiah wrote, *“As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent”* (Jr 28:9). This was certainly the case with Samuel. God proved that he was a prophet because of his short-term prophecies that were fulfilled. 1 Samuel 3:19,20 recorded concerning Samuel, *“So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord.”*

However, if the prophecy of a prophet did not come to pass, then Israel knew the prophet to be a false prophet. Moses had formerly warned,

*And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’—when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him* (Dt 18:21,22).

**God affirms that the fulfillment of prophecy is evidence of His inspiration; fulfilled prophecy is evidence that cannot be refuted (See Is 34:16; 41:22ff; 42:9; 43:9).**

10. **T or F:** The final test that a prophet is true is that his prophecy comes to pass.
11. **T or F:** One could be a true prophet of God, and yet speak things that were contrary to the word of God.
12. \_\_\_\_ Who was proved to be a prophet because all his prophecies were fulfilled?  
(A) Samuel, (B) Moses, (C) Jeremiah, (D) All the preceding



## C. Prophecy Proved God's Word

**Prophecy is the final test of inspiration.** If the prophecies of the Bible had not been fulfilled, then we would certainly know that the Bible is not the word of God. Isaiah referred to this proof of inspiration in the following statement:

*Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, **declaring the end from the beginning**, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure' (Is 46:9,10; see 48:3).*

**A Bible full of fulfilled prophecy is as strong an evidence of its inspiration as a Bible full of unfulfilled and blundered prophecy would be for its not being inspired.** If we subtract the divine revelation of prophecy from the Bible, then we have no other explanation for fulfilled prophecy. Divine revelation is the only real explanation for the prophetic nature of the Bible.

**13. T or F:** For Christians who live today the Bible of fulfilled prophecy is the greatest evidence for the validity of the word of God.

## D. Prophetic Preparation For Gospel

The major purpose of prophecy of the Old Testament was the preparation of Israel for the coming Messiah and the proof that the gospel is of divine origin. Prior to His ascension, Jesus said to His disciples, *"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, **that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me**"* (Lk 24:44). In other words, "these things" (prophecies) had to be fulfilled in order for Jesus to be proved to be the Son of God and Messiah of Israel.

All Prophecy  
Of The Christ  
Were  
Fulfilled.

The Old Testament is loaded with prophecies concerning Jesus as the Messiah. The New Testament refers to Old Testament prophecies hundreds

of times. In the book of Matthew alone there are forty-four references to Old Testament prophets. The fulfillment of all their prophecies in reference to the Messiah is God's proof that Jesus was the Messiah for whom Israel hoped.

The prophets prophesied concerning many things concerning Jesus and the church. They prophesied concerning the spiritual nature of Christianity (See 1 Pt 1:9-12). The prophets prophesied of Christ, His word and many characteristics of the kingdom reign of Jesus (See At 26:22,23; Jn 5:37-39; Lk 24:25-27; 1 Pt 1:10-12). Since all these prophecies were fulfilled, God expects us to conclude that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God, and that believing in this we might have life in His name (See Jn 20:30,31).

**The Old Testament was proved inspired when Jesus fulfilled its prophecies concerning the Messiah.** Jesus was proved to be sent from God when His prophecies of events were fulfilled shortly after He died. The fall of Jerusalem and His coming

**The Destruction  
Of Jerusalem  
Was God's Last  
Proof That Jesus  
Was His Son.**

again are the two major prophecies of Jesus. One was fulfilled in A.D. 70. The other is yet to be fulfilled. Jerusalem was subsequently destroyed. Its fall was proof that Jesus was a true prophet, since the fall fulfilled His prophecies of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The fact that Jesus personally fulfilled prophecy, and His own prophecies were fulfilled, must move us to accept Him as the One who has a message that is greater than what person of this world can produce. We must be moved, therefore, to accept what Jesus said because He was proved to be sent from God.

Just as the prophecies of the Old Testament, and their fulfillment by Jesus are proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament, in like manner, the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem, is God's final appeal to humanity and argument for the inspiration of the New Testament.

God used prophecy as a means of verification and validation. All those who would claim to be proph-

ets today, therefore, must bring forth prophecies as those in the Bible. The true prophet of God must be validated by the fulfillment of his prophecies. If the prophecies of the presumed prophet do not come to pass, then such a person is to be identified as a prognosticator, and thus verified as a false prophet. God knew that false prophets would always arise among His people of God. He thus warned Israel against such deceivers by identifying their false prophecies.

**If one would claim to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, then he or she must prophecy concerning things in the present and future. If his or her prophecies do not come to pass, then such a one is a false prophet.**

- 14. T or F:** There are yet more Old Testament prophecies to be fulfilled in the future concerning Jesus.
- 15. T or F:** The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was God's final proof that Jesus was His Son and that He must be trusted in all that He taught.

## ↩ Prophecy Proves God's Presence ↩

When one examines the nature of valid prophecy, he or she must admit that Bible prophecy is different from the predictions of fake religionists and their soothsaying. **Prophecy is not prediction.** It is the identification of future events that could not have been known by any person who might be familiar with current events. Therefore, **Bible prophecy does not rest upon the skill of people to predict the future by clues that are observed in the present.** Only God can know the future, and thus, true prophecy is the evidence of God working in the lives of those He has chosen to make pronouncements concerning the future.

A better understanding of true prophecy, therefore, gives evidence to the inspiration of the Bible. In other words, if the prophecies of the Bible are true, then there is no doubt concerning the inspiration of the Bible. There can be no doubt concerning the existence of God. Prophecy is simply beyond the capability of any human being, and thus, man alone could never have produced the prophecies that are within the pages of the Bible.

- 16. T or F:** One of the tests of the inspiration of the Bible is that its teachings are superior to those teachings that are taught by religions of the world.

### A. The Details Of Prophecy

In his book, *The Scriptures: God's Living Oracles*, Arthur Pierson wrote, "***The particulars of the prophecy should be so many and minute that there shall be no possibility of accounting by shrewd guesswork for the accuracy of the fulfillment.***" <sup>7:75,76</sup> Pierson continued, "*The prophecy must be more than a good guess or a conjecture. It must possess sufficient precision so as to be capable of verification by means of the fulfillment.*" <sup>7:82</sup>

**True prophecy is detailed enough to erase any claim that the fulfillment was more than coincidental.** Many Bible prophecies at the time they were spoken, named persons yet unborn, specified actions of nations yet unfounded, and minutely pictured yet unfought wars. The specific details of these prophecies left no doubt in the minds of the inquirers that the prophecies were more than of guesswork. They could have come only from God.

- 17. T or F:** In order for a prophecy to be considered a true prophecy, is that it must contain details of that which is prophesied.

### B. Between Prophecy & Fulfillment

Prophecy must have sufficient time and space between pronouncement and fulfillment. The fulfillment of prophecy must be removed far enough in time and space from the initial pronouncement that the prophet has no influence on the fulfillment.

Many Bible prophecies qualify under this point by having hundreds and even thousands of years between pronouncement and fulfillment. Daniel gave a detailed account of the interbiblical period. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and many other prophets, described the destruction of many nations, the destruction of which took place several years after the death of the specific prophet who made the prophecy.

There were prophecies that were made by the

biblical prophets that were fulfilled within the lifetime and geographical location of the prophet (See 1 Sm 3:19,20). These “**short-term**” prophecies proved the prophet to be a true prophet of God. However, those who witnessed the fulfillment of the prophet’s prophecy could also know first hand if the prophet had anything to do with making his prophecy come true. If the immediate prophecies, and their fulfillments, were strong enough to prove that God was working in the life of the prophet, then the people could trust the long-term pronouncements of the prophet.

In reference to God’s work with the Old Testament prophets, **God always proved a prophet to be such within the lifetime of the prophet.** In other words, God did not prove Isaiah, Jeremiah, or any of the other Old Testament prophets, to be His messengers centuries after the prophet’s death. Isaiah was not proved to be a prophet of God only when his prophecies were fulfilled. He was given prophecies that were fulfilled within his lifetime that proved that he was a prophet of God. Therefore, the Old Testament prophets were not determined to be prophets because people read their recorded prophecies many centuries after their death. **They were confirmed to be prophets at the time they lived.**

Prophets Were Prove To Be Prophets At The Beginning Of Their Ministry.

**The immediate witnesses of the Old Testament prophets accepted them as prophets because God gave witness in their lifetimes that they were His messengers (See 1 Sm 3:19,20).**

18. \_\_\_\_\_ What was the purpose of a short-term prophecy?  
 (A) To prepare the people for trouble, (B) To validate one as a prophet,  
 (C) To reveal immediate historical events, (D) All the preceding

### C. Understandability Of Prophecy

Prophecy must be understandable. Prophecies must be sufficiently clear enough in order for the observer to be able to link the pronouncement of the prophecy with the fulfillment of the prophecy. If a

prophecy could not be understood in order to allow the observer to depict its fulfillment, **then the prophecy would have no use in reference to the purpose of prophecy.**

This is not to say that there are prophecies made in the Bible that were not obscure to the immediate hearers. There were prophecies that even the prophets who made them did not understand. However, the fulfillment of the prophecies clarified the prophecy. In other words, when the prophecy was eventually fulfilled, **then there was no question concerning the prophecy and its fulfillment.**

This point refers specifically to the prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom reign of the Messiah. Peter wrote concerning the work of the Old Testament prophets in foretelling the coming of the mystery of God.

*Of this salvation **the prophets have inquired and searched carefully**, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, **searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.** To them it was revealed that, **not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into** (1 Pt 1:10-12).*

Those Prophets  
Who Prophesied  
Of The Messiah  
Did Not Understand  
Their Prophecies.

The Old Testament prophets spoke of things concerning the gospel that they did not understand. They searched their own writings. They wondered about things God had revealed to them concerning the future. However, when these things were revealed in the first century, those who witnessed the fulfillment knew that God had fulfilled the numerous prophecies that had been made centuries before concerning the coming of the Messiah and the gospel. Since these prophecies have been fulfilled, it is

the responsibility of every believer to search the Old Testament prophecies and discover their fulfillment in Christ (See Lk 24:44). This is the meaning of what Paul wrote in Romans 15:4:

***For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, so that we through patience and encouragement of the Scriptures might have hope.***

- 19. T or F:** The clarity of a prophecy was necessary for the sake of the ones to whom the prophecy was given.
- 20. T or F:** A prophecy would serve no purpose if it could not be understood by those to whom it was given.
- 21. T or F:** At the time a prophecy was made, those to whom it was given must understand enough to conclude that it was the prophecy.

### D. No Prophetic Hints

Prophecy must have no historical hints. As stated before, true prophecy is not based on a calculation of existing economical, sociological or national conditions of the situation in which the prophet lived. It should always be as Pierson wrote, *“There should have been nothing in previous history which makes it possible to forecast a like event in the future.”* 7:75

In the Bible there are many prophecies that are in direct contradiction to what the contemporary situation would indicate concerning the future. Many cities and nations had prophecies of doom pronounced upon them when they were in the zenith of their power. Many people, therefore, did not believe the prophet until after his prophecy came true, and then, it was too late for those who initially heard the prophecy.

This one point separates the true prophecy of the Bible from the prophecy of those who would presume to be prophets by the prediction of the future with reference to present clues. It takes no divine help to predict the future with reference to indications in the present. With true prophecy, there are no hints.

**In reference to a true prophecy, there are no indications or signs in the present that something will happen in the future.**

**22. T or F:** For a prophecy to be valid, there must be current circumstances that would indicate that the prophecy is true.

### E. No Prophetic Contradictions

Prophecies must not contradict one another. **There is not one prophecy in the Bible that was spoken so as to contradict other prophecies.** If Bible prophecies were of human origin, then there would be numerous contradictions between prophecies. This point is proved by the contradictory prophecies of modern-day prophets.

By inspiration, however, no prophet of God in the Old Testament prophesied the doom of a city when another true prophet prophesied its salvation.

Those who would be self-proclaimed prophets today should be challenged with this point. They should be challenged to compare their prophecies with others who have claimed to be prophets.

**23. T or F:** A true prophet never contradicted any teaching in the present that had already been revealed.

### ↪ Nations In Prophecy ↪

**The nature of true prophecy is manifested in the actual prophecies that were made in the Old Testament.** Any who would presume to be a prophet of God, therefore, must compare his or her prophecies with those of God's confirmed Old Testament prophets. The same applies to those who would listen to the proclamations of so-called modern-day prophets. The nature of true prophecy as described in the Bible must be the rule by which any so-called prophecy would be judged today.

In Isaiah 34 God called on the nations surrounding Israel to hear their destinies. *“Come near, you nations, to hear; and heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it”* (Is 34:1; see 41:1; 43:9). Such is a challenge by God for all time to all those who would consider the certainty of His word in prophecy.

Numerous prophecies in the Old Testament give



a detailed description of the rise and fall of nations, peoples and cities. Such pictorial accounts stand as a bulwark for the divine guidance of the Old Testament prophets and a standard by which all prophecy must be measured for all time. For man alone, prophecy is impossible. For an omniscient God, however, it is expected. Consider the following magnificent prophecies in relation to their historical fulfillment.

### **A. Egypt In Prophecy**

Ancient Egypt was one of the wealthiest nations of the ancient world. Its scientific knowledge was far advanced beyond its contemporary nations prior to the fifth century B.C. In the days of Ezekiel (593-561 B.C.), Egypt had astronomers and mathematicians who studied principles that we study today. They had beautiful paints, wonderful temples, unmatched architecture and spun textiles that were unsurpassed by any in the ancient world. Present day archaeologists marvel at the grandeur of ancient Egypt.

However, in the height of Egypt's glory, the prophets of God pronounced a dim future for her. Ezekiel prophesied that Egypt would be diminished. She would no longer rule over the nations (See Ez 29:12-15). There would be no more a prince (or, Pharaoh) from the land (See Ez 30:12,13). Egypt was an economically strong nation when Ezekiel and Isaiah prophesied. However, their proclamations concerning Egypt's future depicted the downfall of her economic strength and glory (See Ez 30:12; Is 19:5-8; 20; Jr 46:13-26).

Other prophecies could be pointed out concerning Egypt, but these are sufficient to reveal that history was going to deal harshly with one of the great nations of the ancient world. In fulfillment of these prophecies, it is amazing to see that Egypt's power was diminished. Her influence over the existing nations of the world vanished. After the Babylonian captivity of Israel, and the prophecies of Ezekiel and Isaiah, Egypt was not ruled by its own prince

throughout the centuries. It was ruled by the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, French and English. It is no longer the economic capital of the world, but one of the major poverty stricken nations of the Developing World, if indeed it is developing.

## B. Babylon In Prophecy

In the days of Isaiah (739-690 B.C.) Babylonia was only an infant nation. By the time of Jeremiah's prophecies (627-575 B.C.), however, it was a great empire of the ancient world. The splendor of the Babylonian Empire was magnified by the splendor of the capital, Babylon.

Babylon was a prominent city of the ancient world. Portions of its walls stood almost seventy-five meters high and about twenty meters thick, stretching from thirty to forty kilometers around the city. Babylon had stone-paved streets. Many of its houses had running water. It had beautiful architecture as evidenced by the existing Ishtar Gate. The hanging gardens of Babylon was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This was truly a magnificent city.

Nevertheless, when Babylon was an infant city, and Babylonia an insignificant nation among world powers, Isaiah stood up and proclaimed that the Medes would come against her (Is 13:17). Babylon would be overthrown (Is 13:19). As a city, Isaiah proclaimed that she would never be inhabited again (Is 13:20). The Arabian would pitch his tent where houses once stood (Is 13:21). She would be cut to the ground (Is 14:12; see 14:4-27). When Babylonia became a world empire, Jeremiah cried, *"You shall be desolate forever"* (Jr 51:26). She would be the place where no man dwells (Jr 51:43; see 25:12-14; 50; 51). This was certainly a dim future for a kingdom that would enjoy such power and glory.

It takes only one visit to the ancient site of Babylon to convince the critic that these prophecies have been fulfilled to the last minute detail. Babylon is a heap of ruins. It is the dwelling place of deser-

tion and the epitome of God's great foreknowledge. Most of the territory of ancient Babylonia is present-day Iraq. The territory still suffers from the prophecies of doom that God pronounced upon it. However, the kingdom of Babylonia and its capital have for centuries been banished to nonexistence.

### C. Empires In Prophecy

The Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman empires were all mentioned in prophecy. **Daniel 2** is one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible concerning the nations of the ancient world. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylonia, had a dream concerning a great figure that had a head of gold (Dn 2:32), breast and arms of silver (Dn 2:32), belly and thighs of brass (Dn 2:32), and legs of iron with feet part iron and part clay (Dn 2:33; see Course 19).

Daniel interpreted this dream to refer to four great world kingdoms (Dn 2:37). Babylonia was the first kingdom, with Nebuchadnezzar as its head of gold (Dn 2:38). After this kingdom another would arise, the Medo-Persian kingdom (Dn 5:31). Still another kingdom would follow, the Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great. Finally, a fourth world kingdom would arise, the Roman Empire. It would be in the days of this fourth kingdom, the Roman kingdom, that God would establish a heavenly kingdom reign in the lives of men (Dn 2:44).

The prophecy of Daniel 2, plus the many other detailed prophecies of the book of Daniel (see Course 20), have been so accurately fulfilled that many critics have believed that the book was actually written in the days of the Roman Empire prior to the coming of Christ. Thus, the book of Daniel would have been a history book instead of a book of prophecy. However, honest inquiry will not allow this belief to stand in the minds of true Bible students.

Daniel lived in the days of the Babylonian kingdom (Dn 1:1-6), not in the days of the Roman kingdom. Any attempt to place him and his book of prophecy in

the days of the Roman kings is only a misguided effort to ignore the detailed nature of his prophecies.

### D. Tyre In Prophecy

In **Ezekiel 26**, Ezekiel prophesied that the city of Tyre would be made bare like a rock (Ez 26:4). She would be the place of spreading of fisherman nets (Ez 26:5,14). Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would destroy her (Ez 26:4). Her stones and timbers would be cast into the sea (Ez 26:12). She would be a city laid desolate by her enemies.

In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city of Tyre and labored in war against it for thirteen years. He finally succeeded in taking it in 573 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the main city of Tyre that was located on the mainland but was unable to overcome the fortified section of the city that was located on an island almost a kilometer from the shore.

It was not until 241 years later that Ezekiel's prophecies concerning Tyre were eventually fulfilled. In 332 B.C., Alexander the Great laid siege to the fortified island. To capture the small citadel, he built a causeway from the mainland to the island. He took the stones and remains of the original city and cast them into the sea in order to build this causeway. Today, fishermen dry their nets on the ruins of old Tyre.

### E. Nineveh In Prophecy

Another metropolitan city of the ancient world was the city of Nineveh which was founded by Nimrod (Gn 10:11,12). Nineveh was located on the banks of the Tigris River and was the capital of the warlike Assyrian Empire. Excavations in the nineteenth century revealed that Nineveh was no small city but had a population, according to some, estimated to be as much as 600,000. Many archaeologists believe that the walls of the city were about fifty kilometers in length and composed a parallelogram around the city proper. The city had many great palaces, specifically the Palace of Sargon. One of the great-

est libraries of the ancient world was discovered in the ruins of Nineveh.

In the time of Nineveh's greatness, Zephaniah proclaimed that God would desolate the city and make it dry like the wilderness (Zp 2:13). Nahum likewise prophesied that Nineveh would be laid waste (Nh 3:7).

These prophecies were fulfilled in every detail. In 612 B.C. Nineveh fell to the Babylonians. After this, she became a heap of ruins. Charles E. Pfeiffer, in the edited history book on ancient cities and civilizations (*The Biblical World*) concerning the destruction of this great city, "***Destruction was so complete that its location was soon forgotten by nearly everyone.***" 8:417

## F. Medo-Persia In Prophecy

The prophet Isaiah prophesied from 739 B.C. to about 691 B.C. In **Isaiah 44:28** he made a prophecy that puzzled Jews for more than two hundred years: "*Who says of **Cyrus**, He is My shepherd, and he will perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, 'You will be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid'.*"

This prophecy was uttered before the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon, and while the temple in Jerusalem was still standing. The Jews just could not believe that their sacred city would be destroyed, with the temple. Any prophecy concerning its reconstruction must have surely been discounted by most skeptical Jews during Isaiah's day.

It was not until after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. that this prophecy started to make sense. After the destruction of the city and temple, Nebuchadnezzar carried the Jews off to Babylon for a seventy-year captivity after the 586 destruction. It was in captivity that the Jews remained. They surely wondered what would become of the beloved city. It was then that they began to reconsider the prophecy of Isaiah that was pronounced two hundred years before.

In 550 B.C., a man by the name of Cyrus came to the Persian throne. One can only imagine the excitement that was stirred in the hearts of every Jew who believed in Isaiah's prophecy. After the Persians had conquered Babylon, a king by the name of Cyrus made a decree that the Jews could return to their land and rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem (2 Ch 36:22ff; Ez 1:1ff). Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled.

### G. The Jews In Prophecy

When Fredrick the Great asked for one word that would prove the truth of the Bible, the answer that was given to him was, "Jews." <sup>9:112</sup> The prophecies concerning the Jews are too many in number for all of them to be mentioned here. **Deuteronomy 28** states that if the Jews did not obey the commandments of God (Dt 28:15), they would be scattered among the nations (Dt 28:64,65; see Lv 26:33; Ez 22:15; 24:9). They would endure hardships even to the point of eating their own sons and daughters (Dt 28:53). They would be taken with ships to Egypt (Dt 28:68). However, in the land of their enemies, God said that they would not be utterly rejected and abhorred (Lv 26:44). Countless other prophecies depicted the unhappy consequences of Israel's disobedience.

These prophecies have been fulfilled throughout the centuries in every detail. Beginning with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, and extending to the slaughter, captivity and destruction of the Jews and Jerusalem in A.D. 70, God brought all His prophecies to pass concerning the history of the Jews. Morbid details of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 are related to us by historians like Josephus. Children were eaten because of unbelievable famine. Thousands died of starvation. Over a million Jews died in the A.D. 70 destruction. Jews were sold into Egypt until buyers no longer wanted them. Millions of Jews have been dispersed throughout the world today, and yet, as a race of people, they have

kept their identity. However, the destruction of Jerusalem in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24, was God's last call to Israel to accept Jesus as the Messiah. The fulfillment of Jesus' Jerusalem prophecy was God's last evidence that Jesus was truly the Messiah of Israel. The Jews have a right to exist as a nation today, but they are not the nation through whom a Messiah would come in the future. They were rejected by God over two thousand years ago because they rejected the Messiah, His Son, that was sent to the nation.

## H. Jesus In Prophecy

Jesus was a real character of history. Since the Old Testament was written before His lifetime, it is amazing that so many prophecies were fulfilled in this one man in the short thirty-three years of His life. Nothing short of the fact that Jesus was truly the Son of God can give us a satisfactory answer to this phenomenal fulfillment of prophecy in His life.

It is admitted that one or two or three of the hundreds of prophecies concerning the Messiah could be accidentally fulfilled by any one man of history. However, it would certainly be unbelievable to suppose that all of the prophecies made of Him, to the smallest detail, could have been fulfilled by one man by accident. However, Jesus fulfilled them all. The probability of one man fulfilling all these prophecies by chance would never have been possible by chance.

A few of the key prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus are listed below. Such prophecies and their fulfillments profoundly testify to the fact that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus told the Jews to search the Scriptures, for they testified of Him (Jn 5:39). John wrote that Jesus is the *"spirit of prophecy"* (Rv 19:10). Such He certainly is. Every prophecy that was made in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah was fulfilled by Jesus (Lk 24:44). No single individual could have fulfilled so many prophecies by accident. We must conclude, therefore, that He was the Messiah, and if the Messiah, the prophesied Son of God.

One cannot honestly study prophecy and fulfillment without being convinced that the Bible is the inspired word of God and that Jesus is the Son of God. Hundreds of prophecies were made in the Old Testament to confirm God's messengers and His word. These prophecies have been fulfilled in every detail. False prophets, both ancient and modern, have tried prophecy. All have failed. If one claims to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, then such a person should be tested by prophecy. If his prophecies fail to come to pass, then he is a fake.

Prophecy, therefore, is the final test to the infallibility of the Scriptures, for in the Bible we have recorded both the prophecy and the fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies. This characteristic of the Bible proves beyond doubt that it is not from man, but from a Power that is higher than the ability of man to produce. That "Power" is the God of heaven who has communicated to us through the Bible. In his world renowned book, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, Stephen Charnock rightly concluded,

That power which discovers things future, which all the foresight of man cannot comprehend, and conjecture, is above nature. And to foretell them so certainly as if they did already exist, or had existed long ago, must be the result of a mind infinitely intelligent; because it is the highest way of knowing, and a higher cannot be imagined; and he that knows things future in such a manner must needs know things present and past.<sup>10:58</sup>

### **CHRIST IN PROPHECY**

1. He would be (and was) a descendant of Abraham (Gn 12:1-3; 22:18; see Gl 3:16).
2. He would be (and was) a descendant of Isaac (Gn 21:12; see Hb 11:18).
3. He would be (and was) born of the tribe of Judah (Gn 49:10; 1 Ch 5:2; Mc 5:2; see Mt 2:3-6; Hb 7:17; Lk 3:23-38).
4. He would be (and was) of the line of David (Is 9:7; 11:1; 2 Sm 4:12ff; Jr 23:5; see Mt 1:1ff; Rv 22:16).
5. He would be (and was) born of a virgin (Is 7:14; see Mt 1:23; Lk 1:26-35).
6. He would be (and was) born in Bethlehem (Mc 5:2; see Mt 2:1,8; Jn 7:42).



7. He would be (and was) born in the days of the Roman kings (Dn 2:44; 7:13,14)
8. He would have (and had) a forerunner (Ml 3:1; 4:5; Is 40:3; see Mt 3:1-3; 11:14,15; Lk 1:17; Jn 1:22-28).
9. There would be (and was) a slaughter of babies in an effort to kill Him (Jr 31:15; see Mt 2:16-18).
10. He would be (and was) a sojourner in Egypt (Hs 11:1; see Mt 2:15).
11. He would (and did) live in Galilee (Is 9:1,2; see Mt 4:15).
12. He would (and did ) live in Nazareth (Mt 2:23).
13. He would be (and was) poor (Is 53:2; see Lk 9:58).
14. His mission would (and did) include the Gentiles (Is 42:1-4; see Mt 12:18-21).
15. He would (and did) teach by parables (Ps 78:2; Is 6:9,10; see Mt 13:34,35).
16. His ministry would be (and was) one of healing (Is 53:4; see Mt 8:17).
17. He would (and did) work miracles (Is 35:5,6; see Lk 7:18-23).
18. He would be (and was) rejected by many (Is 53:1; Ps 69:4; 118:22; Is 6:10; see Mt 21:42; Jn 12:38-40; 15:25).
19. He would (and did) make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zc 9:9; Ps 118:26; Is 62:11; see Mt 21:5; Jn 12:13-15).
20. He would be (and was) a smitten shepherd (Zc 13:7; see Mt 26:31; Mk 14:27).
21. He would be (and was) betrayed by a disciple (Ps 41:9; see Mk 14:66-72).
22. He would be (and was) betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zc 11:12,13; see Mt 27:3-10).
23. A potter's field would be (and was) purchased with the thirty pieces of silver (Zc 11:13; see Mt 27:5-7).
24. His followers would (and did) flee at His betrayal (Zc 13:7; see Mt 26:55,56; Mk 14:50,51).
- B He would (and did) choose silence at His trial (Is 53:7; see Mk 15:3-5).
26. He would be (and was) whipped, slapped and spat upon (Is 50:6; see Mt 26:67 - 27:31).
27. He would (and did) die with malefactors (Is 53:9,12; see Lk 22:37).
28. His side would be (and was) pierced (Ps 22:16; Zc 12:10; 13:6; see Jn 19:34-37; Rv 1:7).
29. He would be (and was) given vinegar and gall to drink on the cross (Ps 69:20,21; see Mt 27:34).
30. He would be (and was) mocked (Ps 22:7,8; 35:15-21; see Mt 27:39-44).
31. His grave would be (and was) with the rich (Is 53:9; see Mt 27:57-59).
32. None of His bones would be (and were not) broken (Ps 34:20; see Jn 19:33-36; 19:36).

33. Lots would be (and were) cast for His garments (Ps 22:18; see Mt 27:35; Jn 19:23,24).
34. He would rise (and did) from the dead (Ps 16:10; see Jn 2:19-22; At 2:32; 1 Co 15:1-3).
35. He would (and did) ascend to heaven (Ps 68:18; Dn 7:13,14; see Lk 24:51; At 1:9).
24. \_\_\_\_\_ What rich nation of history did Ezekiel prophecy would be brought down?  
(A) Rome, (B) Babylonia, (C) The Hittities, (D) Egypt
25. \_\_\_\_\_ Which nation did Isaiah prophecy would be overcome by the Medes?  
(A) Assyria, (B) Babylonia, (C) The Hittities, (D) Egypt
26. \_\_\_\_\_ Which city did Jeremiah say would be made desolate forever?  
(A) Jerusalem, (B) Nineveh, (C) Babylon, (D) Damascus
27. \_\_\_\_\_ What king had a vision of four great world empires?  
(A) Ahab, (B) Nebuchadnezzar, (C) Jeroboam, (D) Pharaoh
28. \_\_\_\_\_ Whom did Isaiah prophecy two hundred years before would restore the Israelites to their land?  
(A) Cyrus, (B) Nebuchadnezzar, (C) Augustus Caesar, (D) Darius
29. \_\_\_\_\_ Who eventually finalized the destruction of Tyre?  
(A) Alexander the Great, (B) Cyrus, (C) Augustus, (D) Ahab
30. \_\_\_\_\_ Who founded the city of Nineveh?  
(A) Nimrod, (B) Nebuchadnezzar, (C) Jeroboam, (D) Pharaoh
31. \_\_\_\_\_ What two prophets pronounced the doom of Nineveh?  
(A) Isaiah & Jeremiah, (B) Zephaniah & Jeremiah, (C) Nahum & Jeremiah, (D) Zephaniah & Nahum
32. \_\_\_\_\_ To whom did John refer to as the "spirit of prophecy"?  
(A) Isaiah, (B) Jesus, (C) Paul, (D) Jeremiah

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#### CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

1. Why is prophecy a proof of inspiration?
2. How can we know that a religion false by the predictions that the leaders may make?
3. What is the definition of a true prophet of God?
4. What is the difference between foretelling and forth-telling?
5. What is the difference between prediction and prophecy?
6. Why is prophecy the greatest defense for the inspiration of the Bible?
7. Why would a true prophet not teach that which is contrary to the word of God?

8. Why is all prophecy revelation from God, whereas inspiration is the accurate recording of prophecy?
9. Why did God use prophecy as a proof of His true prophets in the Old Testament?
10. What is meant by the “harmony test”?
11. Why is one today a false prophet if he or she has not obeyed the gospel?
12. When prophesying the coming of the Messiah, why did the Old Testament prophets not fully understand their prophecies?
13. Why must we always conclude that God is present in reference to true prophecy?
14. Why must a prophecy be given in detail concerning that which is yet in the future?
15. What was the purpose of a “short-term” prophecy?
16. Why was a prophecy to be given in language that could be understood?
17. Why is one judged a false prophet if he or she lives in contradiction to the truth of the word of God?
18. Why is it significant to study the fulfillment of prophecy in reference to the nations of the world?
19. Why was it difficult for some to believe a prophecy concerning a nation or city when they lived during the prime time of the nation or city?
20. What was the future difference between national Israel in prophecy in comparison to the cities and nations that led the Jews into captivity?

## ABREVIATIONS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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