

Fulfilled Bible Prophecy

One of the strongest objective evidences that the Bible is Divinely inspired is the phenomenon of *fulfilled prophecy*, a phenomenon that is unique to the Bible because, although some religious books contain a few *vague* forecasts of things to come, they are in no way comparable to the vast number of *specific* prophecies that are found in the Bible.

The purpose of this study is not to present a thorough study on the subject of Bible Prophecy, but, rather, to show how the fulfillment of Bible prophecy is very relevant to Christian evidences and it is to this end we present the following facts:

1. FULFILLED BIBLICAL PROPHECIES CONCERNING NINEVEH

Despite the fact that, at around 770 B.C., the city of Nineveh was at the height of her power and prestige, in Nahum 3:1-7, the prophet Nahum wrote, *"Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses - all because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft. I am against you, declares the LORD Almighty. I will lift your skirts over your face. I will show the nations your nakedness and the kingdoms your shame. I will pelt you with filth, I will treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle. All who see you will flee from you and say, 'Nineveh is in ruins--who will mourn for her? Where can I find anyone to comfort you?'"*

Nahum, the prophet of the Lord, prophesied that Nineveh would be laid waste, that the mighty city would become *"empty...void"*...(Nahum 2:10)...and that is exactly what took place some **fifty years** later despite the fact that, at the time Nahum spoke this prophecy, Nineveh was so strong, and so utterly invincible, that it must have seemed, to those who listened to Nahum's words, that what he prophesied could never come to pass.

Fifty years after Nahum's prophecy, Nineveh was so overwhelmed by the Babylonians that she began to fade from history.

In the seventh century A.D., a battle was fought between the Romans and the Persians on the very site where Nineveh had once stood. Describing the terrain, the historian Edward Gibbon wrote, *"Eastward of the Tigris, at the end of the bridge of Mosul, the great Nineveh had formerly been erected: **the city, and even the ruins of the city, had long since disappeared**; the vacant space afford a spacious field for the operations of the two armies."* [From "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," ch.46, par 24].

2. FULFILLED BIBLICAL PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE NATION OF BABYLON

In 595 B.C., while Babylon was at the pinnacle of power, Jeremiah prophesied, *"Announce and proclaim among the nations, lift up a banner and proclaim it; keep nothing back, but say, 'Babylon will be captured'"* [Jeremiah 50:2]. *"For I will stir up and bring against Babylon an alliance of great nations from the land of the north. They will take up their positions against her, and from the north she will be captured. Their arrows will be*

like skilled warriors who do not return empty-handed" [vs.9]. "How broken and shattered is the hammer of the whole earth! How desolate is Babylon among the nations" [vs.23]. "Babylon will be a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals, an object of horror and scorn, a place where no one lives" [51:37].

Again, Jeremiah's words must have seemed ridiculous to those who felt that what he predicted about Babylon could never happen and, yet, **sixty years** after Jeremiah made his predictions, they were fulfilled. This fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy is described in Daniel 5. In the year 539 B.C., when, one riotous night, Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, was feasting with a thousand of his lords, the hand of a man appeared on the wall and wrote,

"God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians" [Daniel 5:26-28].

This message not only affirmed Jeremiah's prophecy of sixty years earlier, but it also affirmed Isaiah's even earlier prophecy, **almost 200 years earlier**, when he had written, *"Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; no Arab will pitch his tent there, no shepherd will rest his flocks there. But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses; there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. Hyenas will howl in her strongholds, jackals in her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged" [Isaiah 13:19-22].*

All along, God had been watching Babylon, weighing her deeds with infinite precision in the balances of divine justice, but now the hour of her judgment had come, and *"That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom" [Daniel 5:30-31].*

Not only did Babylon change rulers, but, as century succeeded century, it gradually fell into decay until its massive walls were leveled and its proud palaces and temples destroyed, and then, finally, covered by the shifting sands of the desert, it became virtually a *lost* city until rediscovered by archaeologists in recent times.

After exploring the site of Babylon in 1845 and 1850, Austin Layard wrote: *"Shapeless heaps of rubbish cover for many an acre the face of the land . . . On all sides, fragments of glass, marble, pottery, and inscribed brick, are mingled with that peculiar nitrous and blanched soil, which, bred from the remains of ancient habitations, checks or destroys vegetation, and renders the site of Babylon a naked and hideous waste. Owls start from the scanty thickets, and the foul jackal stalks through the furrows."* [From "Discoveries in the ruins of Nineveh and Babylon" (1853) ch. 21, pg. 484].

More recently, explorers have uncovered many remarkable ruins of the famous city and each one confirms the accuracy of the Divine prediction concerning Babylon's fall.

3. FULFILLED BIBLICAL PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE CITY OF TYRE

Tyre, a great city of Phoenicia on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, was extremely famous and wielded widespread influence during ancient times. Shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, when Tyre was congratulating herself on the

additional prosperity that would now flow into her own coffers, Ezekiel prophesied, "*In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: `Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper, therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations . . . I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD*" [Ezekiel 26:1-7, 14].

Because it was inconceivable that the great Tyre could ever suffer such indignities, this prophecy was regarded as the jabbering of a madman, whom nobody took much notice of.

Not long after Ezekiel's prophecy, however, Nebuchadnezzar arrived at the gates of the city and besieged it for thirteen years. As a matter of fact, so long and hard did his soldiers labor at the battering rams that, just as Ezekiel had predicted in Ezekiel 29:18, "*Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon drove his army in a hard campaign against Tyre; every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder made raw. Yet he and his army got no reward from the campaign he led against Tyre.*" Despite the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was robbed of Tyre's main booty, because the people of Tyre had removed it to their island stronghold half a mile away, he did, nonetheless, finally capture that portion of the city which was on the mainland. Because only part of Tyre had been destroyed, and because it certainly had not been made a "*bare rock*," it must have appeared to some that Ezekiel's prophecy had failed to come true. However, after more years had passed and Ezekiel had died, another chapter of Tyre's history began to unfold when, in 332 B.C., Alexander, the Great, demanded the city's surrender. When the Tyrians refused, one of the most notable sieges of history began. Because, once again, the island fortress proved to be seemingly impregnable, Alexander, in desperation, decided upon an unusual course by demolishing the mainland city and throwing the debris into the water to construct a mole, two hundred feet wide and one half mile long, out toward the sea-grit citadel, across which he marched his army to victory.

Today the remains of this mole may still be seen and, moreover, fishermen from the village of Sur, who have grown up around the ancient site, **spread their nets upon the "bare rocks"** from which the "*soil of Tyre was scraped*" by the famous Grecian conqueror nearly twenty-three centuries ago.

4. FULFILLED BIBLICAL PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE NATION OF EGYPT

Despite the fact that Egypt, with its grand and magnificent temples of Noph, the tremendous ancient capital of lower Egypt, was, of all the nations of antiquity, one of the great, yet, Jeremiah prophesied, "*Pack your belongings for exile, you who live in Egypt, for Memphis will be laid waste and lie in ruins without inhabitant*" [Jeremiah 46:19], Ezekiel prophesied, "*I will set fire to Egypt; Pelusium will writhe in agony. Thebes will be taken by storm; Memphis will be in constant distress*" [Ezekiel 30:16], and Isaiah prophesied, "*So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal*

*them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them" {Isaiah 19:21-22}. While Isaiah predicts only that Egypt will **prevail**, Ezekiel qualifies that prediction when he prophesies, "It will be the lowliest of kingdoms and will never again exalt itself above the other nations. I will make it so weak that it will never again rule over the nations" [Ezekiel 29:15].*

5. OTHER EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL PROPHECIES, WHICH WERE FULFILLED CONCERNING THE FOLLOWING NATIONS:

EDOM

Obadiah prophesied, "*The house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; the house of Esau will be stubble, and they will set it on fire and consume it. There will be no survivors from the house of Esau.*" *The LORD has spoken.* [Obadiah 1:18].

PHILISTIA

Zephaniah prophesied, "*Woe to you who live by the sea, O Kerethite people; the word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. "I will destroy you, and none will be left."* [Zephaniah 2:5].

THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

Zephaniah prophesied, "*He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate and dry as the desert.*

6. FULFILLED BIBLE PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE SEQUENCE OF EMPIRES

A remarkable fore-view of world history is given in Daniel 2, as this passage traces this course of history from that day, **2,500 years ago**, to this present day, and beyond into the future.

The future history of coming world empires is seen as a metallic image, divided into *five* sections, Daniel's interpretation of this metallic figure, which is recorded in Daniel 2:37-45, is as follows:

1. The first empire, represented by the "*head of gold*," was the Babylonian Empire, which was the ruling empire at the time that Daniel gave this prophecy. Babylon oppressed Israel for 70 years, from 616 B.C. to 546 B.C.
2. The second empire, represented by the "*breast and arms of silver*," was fulfilled by the Medo-Persian empire, which ruled until 334 B.C.
3. The third empire, represented by the "*mid-section of brass*," was fulfilled by the Grecian Empire under Alexander the Great.
4. The fourth empire, represented by the "*iron legs*," was fulfilled by the Roman Empire.

Marvelous indeed is this revelation of the sequence of coming world empires, and its wonder increases as we take note that what are clear, definite and unmistakable specifications,

[rather than vague generalization], have been fulfilled *exactly* as God said through the prophet Daniel they would be!

This remarkable prophecy has *almost* been completely fulfilled, with the sequence of world empires now fast approaching the stage of world history represented by the image's "*feet*" and the "*ten-toes*," the ten toes representing the "*ten-toed*" government which will exist just prior to the establishment of Christ's coming Kingdom.

[For further study on "*Daniel's Image*" see study on the book of Daniel]

7. FULFILLED BIBLE PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL

The fact that the Jews, after centuries of persecution and dispersal from their homeland, are still in existence, is mute, and eloquent, testimony to the reality of fulfilled Bible prophecy, as well as to the fact that, in a long line of prophesies which have concerned the Jewish people, the restoration of Israel as a nation [*in our generation*] is a miracle akin to their exodus from Egypt.

Note the following Scriptures which state God's promises to preserve Israel as a nation:

Genesis 12:2-3, "*I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*"

Deuteronomy 28:64, "*Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods--gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. [vs.66] You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.*"

Jeremiah 30:11, "*I am with you and will save you,' declares the LORD. 'Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.'*"

Ezekiel 37:21, "*This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land.*"

Isaiah 11:11-12, "*In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.*"

8. FULFILLED BIBLE PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE COMING MESSIAH

Because many of these "*Messianic*" prophecies have already been covered in a previous lesson, we will not take the time, nor the space, to repeat them in this lesson, however, since the reality of their fulfillment is so significant, and relevant, to the subject under discussion, that of fulfilled Bible prophecy, we cannot close this discussion without reiterating the fact that there are over **ninety** Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah which were *all* fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Christ's lineage . . . the manner in which He would be born . . . the exact date of His birth; various aspects of His teachings and ministry . . . and the list goes on and on . . . were all prophesied about in the Old Testament and were, subsequently, fulfilled in the New Testament.

Probability Analysis

- A prediction with **one** detail in it has one chance in two of being fulfilled!
- A prediction with **two** details in it has one chance in four of being fulfilled!

With every added detail to a prediction, the probability of its being filled becomes less and less. Stated in mathematical terms, *The ratio of probability is one-half, multiplied by itself as many times as there are details, or features, in the prediction.*"

For example, the ratio of probability for a prediction with four features would be one-half multiplied by itself **four** times, or one chance in **sixteen** of being fulfilled!

Now, because there were **333 details** in the Old Testament predictions [*prophecies*] concerning the Person, career, and coming to earth, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the ratio of probability of these prophecies being fulfilled would be one-half multiplied by itself **333 times**, or, *one chance in 84 (with 97 zeros following the 84)!*

The fact that these Messianic prophecies which were so clearly and definitively given and that they were accurately fulfilled, [despite their incredible ratio of probably of *being* fulfilled] certainly gives a great deal of credibility, and credence, to the reality of the Divine inspiration of the Bible!

Despite the fact that there is not the time, nor the opportunity, in this study, to go into all the other unique characteristics of the Bible that bear innumerable marks of Divine inspiration in their very characteristics in the next lesson, namely:

1. The Law of First Mention
2. The Numerical Structure of Scripture, and
3. Types and Shadows