

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Prewritten History, Part 2

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 1350

Tonight we continue in our series on "Prophecy: The Mark of Divine Revelation," continuing in the overall series of "Is the Bible Believable?" We see that in our study, it is clearly revealed that one of the seals of the veracity of the Word of God is its predictive accuracy. Any book that could predict what the Bible predicts and see the fulfillment absolutely accurate has to be written by God, for no human mind has that kind of foreknowledge or prescience. Divine omniscience is stamped on the pages of this Book, because of its predictive prophecy. It is loaded with prewritten history, and it becomes apparent, I think, in any careful study of the Bible that the prophets of the Old and New Testament were imparted with the knowledge of future things that was impossible to the human mind. There is no way man could know those things. The only answer to solving the riddle of this Book is that it was written by God. All the prewritten history and all the absolute perfect accuracy of fulfillment marks the Bible as revelation from God.

I wanna mention to you that God defends His Word through prophecy, even in His Word. Now think about that. Prophecy is one of the great apologetics, one of the great defenders of the faith, defenders of the truth of the Scripture, and God even uses it as such. When God wanted to establish His Word with His people, He gave them predictions and then fulfilled them in their eyes; and their response was, "This must be God's Word. It is coming to pass," and they gained their confidence in God from seeing Him fulfill prophecy in their midst.

Illustrations - Abraham. Abraham was told that his wife, Sarah, would have a son, and a great nation would come from that seed, in Genesis 12 and repeated in chapter 15. Sarah was 90. Abraham was nearly 100. Both of them had not only been unable to have children through all their married life, but their faith was even failing. God then came and said in chapter 18, "I promise you a son within a year," and it came to pass, chapter 21. Sarah thought it was so ridiculous that she laughed and, as if to rebuke her unbelief, Abraham named the child Laughter (that's Isaac in Hebrew), and so God vindicated His Word in Abraham and Sarah's life by fulfilled prophecy.

Moses. Moses, whom we think of as such a great stalwart, a great giant was weak and vacillating. In Exodus 3, he needed something to transform him, and God chose prophecy. God told Moses that the very place on which he stood by the burning bush would later be a place where he and the Israelites would worship God. The Mount of God was called Horeb or Sinai, and in Exodus 19 to 40 that is exactly what happened. Moses returned to the very spot of the burning bush, and there they worshipped God. God also predicted to Moses that his brother, Aaron, was at that very moment

already on his way to meet him in Exodus chapter 4, "And it came to pass that after forty years of separation, the meeting would occur at the place of the burning bush," and that's exactly what happened, and God used fulfilled prophecy in the life of Moses just like He had in the life of Abraham and Sarah, to prove to them that He was God.

You take, for example, the plagues. God wanted to show Israel that He was God, so God predicted the plagues, and then fulfilled the predictions. Moses and Aaron would stand in the presence of Pharaoh, and they would say, for example, in Exodus 7:17, "The waters of Egypt are going to become blood," and what would happen? The waters of Egypt became blood. They announced a plague of frogs in chapter 8, and frogs came. You see, God was saying in His predictive Word, "You better believe that I'm God, for My Word comes to pass." It was a testimony, not only to Israel, but to Egypt, and when this amazing series of divine manifestations was over, when all that had been predicted in Egypt had happened, when even climaxing it there was the crossing of the Red Sea, what was the result? Listen to Exodus 14 verse 30. "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord."

You see, God wanted their trust. God wanted them to believe in Him, and God did in their midst fulfill prophecy in order to vindicate His authority, and they bought it. They believed. That was apologetics. God is an apologist. God defended Himself to His people and frequently did it by fulfilling predictions that He made to them. Take Elijah. Elijah appears on the pages of Scripture in 1 Kings chapter 17 in verse 1, and he says to that crummy character Ahab, "As the Lord God lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." He says, "God says, 'No rain.'" You know what happened? No rain. God said it, and that's how it happened. Three years later, as God had stated, the rain came; and when it came, the response of the people is interesting. You remember that the people all cried out at the time of the Mount Carmel when Elijah had poured water on the sacrifice, and there was water everywhere; and immediately following that, you remember, there was the sound of abundance of rain, and the cry of all the people was, "The Lord...what?...He is God. The Lord, He is God."

Even Jesus, when Jesus came, was the consummation of all the prophets, and He Himself was certified by prophecy. The Jews, for example, came to Him, and they said, "We want a sign. We want a sign of Your authority," and you know what He said to them? He predicted His resurrection, and then He fulfilled it. When John the Baptist wanted a sign, and John the Baptist sent some of his disciples to find out if this really was the Messiah, Jesus alluded to the fulfillment of ancient prophecies and said, "On the basis of such fulfillment, I am the Messiah." Most extensive use of fulfilled prophecy inside the confines of Scripture is in Isaiah 40 to 53; and, in that entire section, God places Himself in contrast to the false gods, the impotent gods of paganism; and over and over again, read it sometimes, from Isaiah 40 to 53, God keeps saying, "I am the Lord. I am the Lord. No one else is. There's none beside Me. My glory will I not give to another. I am God. I am the Lord." And

the basis upon which God claims that is the ability to predict the future.

Lemme illustrate that to you by calling your attention to two passages. Isaiah chapter 41 verse 21, and this is within that context. Isaiah 41:21, "'Produce your cause,' says the Lord." There He's calling upon the pagan gods. "'Bring forth your strong reason,' saith the King of Jacob. 'Let them bring them forth and show us what shall happen. If these are true gods, let 'em predict the future. Let them show the former things, what they are, that we may consider them and know the latter end of them; or declare us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and behold it together. Behold, you are of nothing, your work of nought; an abomination is he who chooses you. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come; from the rising of the sun shall he call upon My name. And he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, as the potter treadeth clay. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? And beforetime, that we may say, 'He is righteous'? Yeah, there is none that showeth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.'"

In other words, He says, "I'm the only one who declares the future. I'm the only one who speaks the truth that has not even yet come to pass." So God, again, vindicating who He is by His ability to predict the future. Over in chapter 46, Isaiah 46:9, "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'" God says, "My Word is just as good in the future as it is in the present."

So you see, here, God, from earliest times uses fulfilled prophecy as proof of His Word, and His authority. The Old Testament is loaded with these kind of proofs. Lemme give you an interesting illustration. Turn to Ezekiel 12, and all I'm showing you is that if God used predictive prophecy as an apologetic, so should we. He set a precedent. Ezekiel 12:12, "The prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth; they shall dig through the wall to carry out through it. He shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in My snare; and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, through he shall die there." Now that's an interesting prophecy. The reason I read verse 12 was just to get the name there, the prince. Now who is the prince referred to in Ezekiel 12? It is King Zedekiah. King Zedekiah is always referred to as the prince by Ezekiel, because Jehoiachin was still referred to as the king of Judah, though in captivity. So Zedekiah is always terms the prince.

Now, the prophecy says in verse 13 that, "There will be a net spread upon Zedekiah. He will be taken in a snare, brought to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, though he die there." Now, how could you possibly understand a prophecy like that? A man is hauled off to Babylon. He stays there till his death, but never sees Babylon. How could that possibly be fulfilled?

Go back to 2 Kings chapter 25, and I'll show you. Now, just because we went backwards in the text doesn't mean we went backwards in time. The Bible is not in the Old Testament ordered chronologically. This is later than the prophecy. "It came to pass...in 2 Kings 25:1...in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, he and all his host, against Jerusalem and camped against it; and they built forts against it round about." That's how they would siege the place. "And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of King Zedekiah." There he is. "And on the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine prevailed in the city. There was no bread for the people of the land. And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden (now the Chaldeans were against the city round about)." They had it surrounded. "And the king went the way toward the arabah." That's south toward the desert. "And the king...or the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army were scattered from him."

Now, Nebuchadnezzar got Zedekiah. "They took the king, brought him up to the king of Babylon in Riblah." That is to Nebuchadnezzar, "And they pronounced sentence upon him. They slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with fetters of bronze, and carried him to Babylon." The king will be carried to Babylon, but he will not what? See it. The prophecy came to pass. One of the most cruel things you could ever imagine. The last thing Zedekiah ever saw with his eyes was the slaughter of his own sons. That was indelibly imprinted as the last sight he ever had, and then they tore his eyes out, chained him, and hauled him off to Babylon where he died.

In Jeremiah 52 verse 10, it says this. "And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; he slew also the princes of Judah in Riblah. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah. And the king of Babylon bound him in chains, carried him to Babylon, put him in prison till the day of his death." How did Ezekiel know that? He knew it because God knew it, because God knows everything. This is a great testimony of fulfilled prophecy in the context of Scripture.

Now broadening our study, you'll remember that last time we'd looked at some prophecies regarding great cities and great countries. We saw the prophecy of Ezekiel 26 on the city of Tyre, the prophecy of Ezekiel 28 on the city of Sidon, the prophecy of Ezekiel 30 on the land of Egypt, particularly Thebes and Memphis. We saw the prophecy of Nahum on Nineveh.

Continuing with a fifth city or country, we look tonight at the study of the prophecy on the city of Babylon. What happened to this great city of Babylon? This city where Zedekiah was taken in fulfillment of prophecy. Turn in your Bible to Isaiah 13. Now, Babylon was really it. You've heard, if you know anything about the seven wonders of the ancient world, of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Babylon may have been the greatest city in the world. It was richer than its rival city, Nineveh. Some people have said it was, without doubt, the greatest city of ancient history. It was

famous for its culture. It was famous for its education. It was famous for its trade. It was famous for its architecture. It just was a marvelous city.

Babylon was located on a stream that flowed to the Indian Ocean, and the stream was navigable so that trade could come up and...and go back and forth between the Indian Ocean and Babylon; and, at one point, it came very near to the Mediterranean Sea, so that it wasn't far from the navigable stream to the Mediterranean; and they even had access to the Mediterranean Sea that way. Babylon was a marvelous city. Look at chapter 13 verse 19. "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." Now you gotta know a little bit about when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. I mean He really did a job on that place. He buried it. There were fire and brimstone eruptions that absolutely inundated and buried that city of Sodom and Gomorrah into oblivion. Today, Sodom and Gomorrah is in a place underneath the water at the end of the Dead Sea.

When God said, "I'll wipe out Sodom and Gomorrah," He wasn't kidding; and the prophet says that, "Babylon will be like Sodom and Gomorrah," totally wiped out. This isn't talking about some Podunk place. This is the greatest city in the world. Seems ridiculous for some peanut prophet in the middle of a little obscure place called Israel to stand up and say, "Babylon will be destroyed," and it isn't only that. He says in verse 20, "It shall never be inhabited again. Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there," and Bedouins, believe me, pitch tents almost everywhere around the area of the Middle East, but not there.

"Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there." Now, watch these prophecies. "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; ostriches shall dwell there, hegoats shall dance there. The wild beasts." Incidentally, the word ostriches could equally be translated owls, perhaps better. "The wild beasts of the coastland shall cry in their desolate houses, jackals in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged." The prophet said, "Babylon has had it, and it's gonna fall; and when it falls, it's really gonna come down hard."

In chapter 14 of Isaiah verse 23, something else is...it's gonna be a possession for the porcupine. "And pools of water." It's gonna be a swamp, "'And I'll sweep it with the broom of destruction,' says the Lord of hosts." Over in Jeremiah chapter 51 to add to the prophecy. Jeremiah 51:26, "They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate forever." Verse 43, "Her cities are a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness...now watch this...a land in which no man dwells, neither does any son of man pass by it." Now, friends, you have so many prophecies there in regard to this city that I can hardly count 'em all up. Certain animals are gonna be there. Arabians won't pitch their tents there. No sheep folds are gonna be there. A swamp's gonna be there. It's gonna be uninhabited, not even gonna be traversed, and it's gonna be totally desolate. That was absolutely a staggering prophecy. A great civilization of Babylon, but you know something?

Babylon was wiped out. Encyclopedia Britannica says, "Until the 19th century, the knowledge of Babylon was based on the Old Testament and a few Greek writers." They didn't even know where it was. It was so flattened.

The inscriptions found there recently give us accounts of stupendous building projects by Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, the city was originally built in the 7th and 6th centuries before Christ into its greatness by Nabopolassar, who was the father of Nebuchadnezzar. Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar built the city into its greatness. They were tremendously wealthy; and you remember in Daniel's image of the four kingdoms of the world, the Babylonian Kingdom was made of gold, showing that it was the richest of any world kingdom in the history of the world. It was a tremendously wealthy kingdom, and they made a city that was unbelievable. In recent archeological digs, since the 19th century, they've discovered what was once that place; but up until the 19th century, it was so desolate, they never even knew it existed. There wasn't anything to even indicate it; but now that they've uncovered parts of it, they've found that, according to ancient authors, that there was a river that ran through the middle and split it into two parts, and it was the river that we know as the Euphrates River. It split the city into two parts, and the city was surrounded by marshes and swampy areas. It was 196 square miles. That's a walled city. Its sides were 14-mile walled sides, 56 miles around. It had a 30-foot moat and double walls. The outer wall was 311 feet high and 87 feet wide. They had a hundred gates of solid brass, 250 watchtowers, and the watchtowers were 400 feet high. Now that's a city, and that's a well-guarded one, and that whole thing collapsed into so much oblivion, they couldn't even find it till the 19th century.

Herodotus translated, tells us about it fell. The Persians, you remember Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire. The Persians saw that city, and they wanted it. They knew that was the gem of the world, but they knew they couldn't break the walls down. I mean 311 feet high and 87 feet thick, you'd have to be picking away a long time to get that wall down. So they knew that was ridiculous. No way they could do that, and the towers were so high that they couldn't...they couldn't get any higher than the towers, and so they were always being watched, but they observed that the Euphrates river ran through the middle of the city, and it ran under the walls, and they measured it as they besieged the city, and they found that the Euphrates was deep enough and wide enough to march an army through; and so Cyrus ordered his troops to get out their shovels and start to dig; and they dug some tributary canals off the river and drained the river off, diverting it from the city and the river dried up, and they marched in on the dry ground and destroyed Babylon. It fell so easily. They simply diverted the river, marched in, and took the city.

The amazing thing about this thing is when it happened all the Babylonians were so secure. Here they were being stormed by the Persian army, which is a mighty army, and they were having a party. You say, "How do you know that?" The par...it tells all about the party in Daniel 5. You wanna see the party? Turn to Daniel 5. It's not a good time to have a party. It's a great illustration of how men go merrily on their stupid way while destruction awaits. Of course, Belshazzar made a great feast;

and, oh, everybody was drunk; and they were drinking out of gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, when he sacked Jerusalem. And all this was going on. All of a sudden, oh, something happened that wasn't planned at the party. Verse 5, "The same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand," and when you start seeing fingers without a man, without a hand, something's going on. "And the fingers wrote against the lamp stand upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." He watched part of a hand writing on his wall.

"The king's countenance was changed...I guess...and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, the soothsayers." Astrology something new? No, and just as ill-advised today as it was then. "And the king spoke, who said to the wise men of Babylon, 'Whosoever shall read this writing and show me its interpretation shall be clothed with scarlet, have a chain of gold about his neck, and be the third ruler in the kingdom.' Then came in all the king's wise men. They couldn't read the writing. They couldn't make it known to the king. The king was really upset, and his countenance was changed in him. His lords were perplexed. And the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet house. And the queen spoke and said, "King, live for ever! Let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed. There's a man in thy kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. And in the days of thy father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him whom the King Nebuchadnezzar thy father - the king, I say, thy father - made master of magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. For as much as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and revealing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts were found in the same Daniel."

Well, that's really one super buildup. "Get that Daniel." So Daniel comes, and the message that Daniel gives is not too good. You remember the message? Verse 18, "O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty and glory and honor. And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would he slew; whom he would he kept alive; whom he would say he set up; and whom he would he put down. When his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. He was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointed it over whomsoever He will."

You know what he says? He says, "Nebuchadnezzar was all right, but when he stopped acknowledging that God gave him the right to rule, God made him like a madman."

"And thou his son, O Belshazzar, has not humbled thine heart though thou knewest all this, but has lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven. And they have brought the vessels of His house before

thee." That is of the temple. "And thou and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which see not nor hear nor know. And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. Then was the part of the hand sent from Him, and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." What does it mean? "This is the interpretation. Mene: God has numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Tekel: Thou art weighted in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres: The kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians."

Verse 30, "And in that night Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans was slain. And Darius the Mede took the kingdom." That night. Listen, God rules the kingdoms of men. God calls the shots - 539 BC, Babylon came crashing down; and from then on, it began to rot and decay; and the Prophet Isaiah said in chapter 13 of Isaiah that it would be decaying, and that it would fall to the place where it was uninhabited. By 116 AD, Trajan described it as a pile of mounds. That was all that was left. Today, 45 miles south of Bagdad lies the windswept ruins of Babylon, destroyed and never, ever inhabited again.

Professor Hermann Hilprecht says, and he's an archeologist, "It is wild animals, boars, hyenas, jackals, wolves, and an occasional lion that infest ancient Babylon." Exactly what Isaiah said would happen. And, in fact, they have found owls in flocks of 100; and, interestingly enough, Bedouins, those are the traveling Arabs that move about, Bedouins do not even live there. They are superstitious, and to this day, they will not pitch their tents inside the ancient city of Babylon. That's what the prophet said, didn't he? That the Arabs would not pitch their tents there. They will not. The soil there prevents vegetation; consequently, there is no growth, and so no sheep folds are there.

Peter Stoner says in his book, "The large rocks that were imported to build the foundations of Babylon have never been removed." That's what the prophet said, remember? That the stones would never be taken away. The prophet said, "Men will not pass by the ruins." Did you know that there is no route, there is no road going anywhere by Babylon? People don't even pass by there. A few visitors. Isaiah said it will be covered with swamps. The Encyclopedia Britannica says, "A large part of the old city of Babylon is buried under a deep bed of silt, lying beneath the water table." "The probability," says Dr. Stoner, "of this happening by chance is one in 5 million." Can't happen by chance.

Why did God wipe it out? You heard what Daniel said to Belshazzar. I'll give you another good reason. Werner Keller in his most helpful book, The Bible as History, says this - and that's a book that Christians oughta have for historical background - "Altogether, there are in Babylon 53 temples of the chief gods, 55 chapels of Mardukh, 300 chapels for the earthly deities, 180 altars for the goddess Ishtar, 180 for the gods Nergal and Adad, and 12 others of different gods." Idolatry destroyed that city.

The following passage is an interesting thing to read. I'm gonna read it to you. It's included in the book entitled, They Wrote on Clay by Edward Chiera, University of Chicago Press 1966. This particular individual is writing the letter to his wife. This is a man who was excavating the ancient site of Babylon. Actually it was Kish, which is about eight miles from ancient Babylon, and this is his letter to his wife. "This evening, I made my usual pilgrimage to the mound covering the ancient temple tower. Seen from below, it does not look so high as might be expected of a Babylonian temple tower. Did not that of Babylon pretend to reach to heaven? One gets the...the answer after ascending it. Though rather low, it can hardly be more than 500 feet, still from the top, the eye sweeps over an enormous distance on the boundless, flat plain. The ruins of Babylon are near. All around the tower, small heaps of dirt represent all that remains of Kish, one of the oldest cities of Mesopotamia. The large network of canals, which in ancient times distributed the waters of the Euphrates over all this land, is now represented by a series of small mounds of dirt running in all directions. Even the Euphrates has abandoned this land by changing its course, a dead city."

The archeologist writes further, "I have visited Pompeii and Ostia, and I have taken walks along the empty corridors of the Palatine; but those cities are not dead. They are only temporarily abandoned. The hum of life is still heard, and life blooms all around. They are but a step in the progress of that civilization to which they have contributed their full share and which marches on under their very eyes. Here only is real death, not a column or an arch stands to demonstrate the permanence of human work. Everything has crumbled into dust. The very temple tower, the most imposing of all these ancient constructions, has entirely lost its original shape. Where are now its seven stages? Where is the large stairway that led to the top? Where is the shrine that crowned it? We see nothing but a mound of earth - all that remains of the millions of its bricks. On the very top, some traces of walls; but these are shapeless. Time and neglect have completed their work. Under my feet are some holes which have been burrowed by foxes and jackals. At night, they descend stealthily from their haunts in their difficult search for food and appear silhouetted against the sky. This evening, they appear to sense my presence and stay in hiding, perhaps wondering if this stranger who has come to disturb their peace. The mound is covered with white bones which represent the accumulated evidences of their hunts. Nothing breaks the deathly silence. A jackal is now sending forth his howl, half cry, half threat, thrust. All the dogs of the Arab village immediately take up its challenge; and, for a moment, the peace is upset by howling and barking; but a certain fascination holds me here. I should like to find a reason for all this desolation. Why should a flourishing city, the seat of an empire, have completely disappeared? Is it the fulfillment of a prophetic curse that changed a superb temple into a den of jackals? Did the actions of the people who lived here have anything to do with this? Or is it the fatal destiny of mankind that all its civilizations must crumble when they reach their peak? And what are we doing here trying to wrest from the past its secrets, when probably we ourselves, and our own achievements, may become an object of search for peoples yet to come?" End quote.

Bible solves the man's mystery, doesn't it? Lemme tell you about another city, the city of Samaria. In Micah 1:6, we have the prophecy relative to Samaria. It says, mark it, "Therefore, I will make Samaria like an heap of the field." Just like a mound. "And like plantings of a vineyard, I'll pour down its stones into the valley. I will uncover the foundations of it." Samaria was a famous city. It was the capital of the northern kingdom. It was to Israel what Jerusalem was to Judah. The indication is it will fall violently. It will become a heap. Vineyards will be planted there, and stones still be poured into the valley. Seven-hundred-and-twenty-two years BC, Sargon took Samaria. Samaria'd been built by Omri. Omri was really bad. He was horrible, 1 Kings 16:25, was one of the most wicked kings that ever lived. The only one that was worse was his son, Ahab.

First Kings 16:30 tells us Ahab was worse than Omri. Ahab's wife was Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon. She killed all the prophets and led the people to worship Baal. Now, because of this, God said, "I'm gonna destroy that city." The city is now gone. It was wiped out by Sargon in 722; later by Alexander in 331, and by John Hyrcanus in 120 BC. That city was again wiped out; and, you know, this summer, we were in that area of Samaria; and you know what's in Samaria? As far as your eye can see are fields, and the dominant kind of field there is the vineyard. This is true. Olives are everywhere in that area, as well. It has been used to cultivate olives and fig trees.

Van de Velde says, "Samaria, a huge heap of stones. Her foundation has been discovered." Isn't that what it says? Micah 1:6, "I will uncover...what?...the foundations." "Her streets plowed up and covered with cornfields and olive gardens. Samaria has been destroyed, but her rubbish thrown down into the valley. Her foundation stones lie scattered about on the slope of the hill." You see exactly, exactly what Micah said would happen, and that's the comment of an archeologist.

One of the most interesting places that you go to in the Middle East, and, again, we were there this summer, is the area of Moab and Ammon. Ammon is today the modern area of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the capital is Amman. You know that Amman was nothing till the 20th century? And even in the '30s, Amman was an Arab village of 20,000 people. Today, it's a...it's a city of multiple hundreds of thousands of people, and it's the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan under Hussein. The Bible said something about Moab and Ammon, that area. It's says it in Ezekiel chapter 25. Ezekiel 25:3. "The Lord said to Ezekiel, 'Prophesy against the Ammonites from Ammon, and say unto the Ammonites, 'Hear the word of the Lord God.' Thus saith the Lord God, 'Because thou sadist, 'Aha,' against my sanctuary when it was profaned.'" When somebody profaned the sanctuary, and they said, "Haaaaa, how about that? You got what you deserve."

"And against the land of Israel when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity, behold, therefore, I'll deliver thee to the men of the East for a possession. They shall set their palaces in thee, make their dwelling in thee. They shall eat thy fruit and drink thy milk." Verse 11, "I will execute judgments also upon Moab, and they shall know that I am the Lord." How?

"Because I said I'll do it, and I will do it," and that's fulfilled prophecy; and, again, God uses the apologetic of fulfilled prophecies to substantiate His own Word in history.

Now, that isn't all that is said about Moab and Ammon. There's more in the Prophet Jeremiah chapter 48 verse 47. "'Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days,' saith the Lord." 49:6, "'And afterward, I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon,' says the Lord." Now watch. God says, "I am going to take those cities and judge them. Ammon will be occupied by the men from the East who will possess it and build their palaces there; but, in the end times, I will again restore Moab and again restore Ammon." How interesting. God never said that about Babylon, and Babylon has never been restored.

Say, "What is going on there now?" You know, for long centuries, for 2,500 years, nothing was there to speak of. Those were powerful kingdoms. I mean very powerful. They were well-defended kingdoms right there to the east of the Dead Sea and up on the hills; but the prophecy came true, and those cities were conquered, and those areas were captured, and they were captured from the East. The Emir Abdullah of the East, the ruler of Transjordan was just one in a succession of people who came from the East; and they came in, and they wiped that area out, and, finally, Emir Abdullah built a palace there. Isn't that what the prophet said they would do? "Men from the East would build their palaces." He became the director of the Arab Legion and fought against the Jews.

Moab and Ammon became horribly desolate, and it's amazing today as you drive through that area, there is nothing there, absolutely nothing but Bedouins roaming around. You mean this was the garden spot of the world? You mean this is the Promised Land? I can't imagine. You know why? Because it's all been decimated in the fulfillment of prophecy. Jerusalem has been denuded of its trees. At one time, this...the area of Jerusalem would be much like Arrowhead - trees everywhere. But wiped out. Conquerors came in and tore it apart and stripped it naked. Then God moved into these other areas and wiped them out, and the fertility of those areas is ended, and it's desolation; but right in the middle of Moab and Ammon is the growth of this amazing city, Amman. A handful of people...a handful of people in the '20s; 20,000 in the '30s; hundreds of thousands right now, and a major airport, flying in there with a jet. We flew over that area. We remembered the prophet had said, "I will bring again Ammon and Moab."

There's another interesting prophecy regarding the land of Edom. Lemme show you what the prophet said about Edom, Isaiah 34. Notice Isaiah 34...verse 6, and here is the prophecy against Edom. Verse 5 says it's gonna come against Edom, and verse 6 says, "The sword of the Lord is filled with blood; it's made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats and the fat of the kidneys of rams; for the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. And the wild oxen shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness." Fatness means the inside pouring out of flesh. "For it is the day of Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion."

Now watch verse 9. "The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch." Just that is so interesting. We went to Petra, and you get on a horse, and you have to go into Petra. Petra is built inside of a...of a tremendous canyon. The only way in it is to go through this...just this long gorge that, at some places, only a single horse can pass. Theoretically, Petra could be guarded by one man. You get inside, and it opens up, and they've carved an entire massive city out of the rocks. Absolutely astounding, the most astounding thing I've ever seen in my life; and all the way along as you're riding in, I noticed there was a little thing carved in the side of the canyon walls, a little rut, and it ran all the way in, and there's no other way out, and there's no other way into that place. There was no water inside, but there's an amazing spring that continues to bubble up near there, and there's plenty of water; and what they did was they ran the water along the little ridges in the walls; and anybody who needed water for their cave just tapped off the ridge, and it ran in. And this water kept running in and running in, and that's how they got their water supply; and when they conquered, somebody just plugged up the ridge. They just turned off the water, and what the prophet said came to pass. "The streams thereof shall be...what?...turned to pitch." That's exactly what happened.

The only way the city could ever been taken would be to starve or to cause the people to be so thirsty that they would surrender rather than die. Verse 10, "The destruction that comes on that city shall not be quenched by night or day. Its smoke shall go up for ever." That means it's an eternal desolation. "From generation to generation, it shall lie waste. None shall pass through it for ever and ever." I'm telling you, folks, you can't pass through it. You can go in there and look at it and turn around, come back again; and nobody goes there. The only people who go there are tourists; and the Arab boys with their horses who take us there. No one goes there. The prophet said, "No one will go there." There's nothing there.

Verse 13, "Thorns shall come up in its palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortress thereof. It shall be a habitation of jackals and a court for owls. Wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wild beasts of the island. The wild goat shall cry to his fellow. The screech owl shall rest there and find a place of rest. The great owl will make her nest; lay and hatch; and gather under her shadow. There shall be kites...other kind of birds...gathered, every one with her mate." Gonna be a haunt for birds and wild animals; and that's truly what it is.

Go to Jeremiah 49 verse 17. Says, "Also Edom shall be a desolation; every one that goes by shall be appalled and hiss at all its plagues. It'll be like Sodom and Gomorrah." Verse 16, "Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the...what?...clefts of the rock." All the people who lived in Petra lived in the rocks. You can't believe it. After we had taken our little tour in there, I took off on my own, because I wanted to explore further, and so I went over this crest. There's kind of a narrow thing, and I kinda walked along the wall of the canyon a little bit, and I came, and this area opened to me, and it was just pockmarked with caves everyplace; and you could see that an entire civilization had lived in the clefts of the rock, holding the height of the hill.

"Though thou make thy nest as high as the eagle...what?...I'll bring thee down."

They thought they were impregnable. God says, "You're not impregnable. I'll tear you down." And, boy, I'm telling you, that is the most desolate place you've ever seen, and to stand there in the midst of it and look around at all of the mighty carved out temples, and to imagine the tremendous civilization and see the desolation is there, speaks of the power of the Word of God to fulfill itself.

Ezekiel has much to say about Edom. Chapter 25 verse 13, "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, 'I'll stretch My hand upon Edom, cut off man and beast from it...now watch...I will make it desolate from Teman...T E M A N...and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. I'll lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel. They shall do in Edom according to Mine anger and according to My fury. They shall know My vengeance,' saith the Lord God." Interesting little note just to pull out there. That...that Edom would be destroyed to Teman. What's interesting about that is that, in the destruction of Edom, the destruction wiped out every city in Edom except Teman, exactly as the Word of God predicted.

Obadiah 18 says, "But there shall not be any remaining in the house of Esau, for the Lord has spoken it." It was to be conquered by the heathen and the Jews, and it was conquered by both...The Nabateans took Edom, and they are the children of the East mentioned in Ezekiel 25. Sometime in the 6th century, the Nabateans swept west and gobbled up Edom, and they were powerful. They took Petra by cutting off the water, and they swept north, and they turned that entire area into what is known as Nabatean Arabia, and that's the Arabia where Paul spent the years that he spent before he began his ministry. They conquered that whole area; and, of course, it became a terrible desolation. Later on, the Jews under John Hyrcanus and Simon of Gerasa attacked it, conquered it, fulfilling the prophecy that it would be taken by Israel, as well.

Listen to this. Until the 19th century, when Petra was discovered, the skeptics believed that the Edomites never existed, but that they were only a legend. That's how totally they were obliterated; and it wasn't until the 19th century when the archeologists came upon...and I can't imagine the first guy that walked in that place. When the archeologists came upon that city and discovered that...that Petra existed, that they realized that what the Bible said about the Edomites was true. There were such a people. They just got so wiped out that they were hard to find...One of the wonders of the world, that city. Today, absolutely bare. Lizards, animals, nobody lives there, not even the Bedouins. Nobody. It is silent. It is lonely. It is decaying with the winds of time. Alexander Keith said this, "I would that the skeptic could stand as I did among the ruins of this city, among the rocks, and there open the sacred Book and read the words of the inspired penman, written when this desolate place was one of the greatest cities in the worlds. I see the scoffer arrested, his cheek pale, his lips quivering, and his heart quaking with fear, as the ruined city cries out to him in a voice loud and powerful as that of one risen from the dead. Though he would not believe Moses and the prophets, he believes the handwriting of God Himself in the desolation and eternal ruin of this city." End quote.

The only thing left of Edom today, Teman, modern city of Mahan. It still exists on the ancient border. The prophet said it'll be destroyed until Teman. That still exists, and nobody passes through it. It's the dead-end of all dead-ends...

Listen, folks, when you start talking about fulfilled prophecy, you begin to see that God wrote this Book. Lemme just take you for a minute into Matthew chapter 11, and show you a New Testament prophecy. This is interesting. Matthew 11 verse 20. Our Lord, of course, did much of His ministry in the area around the Sea of Galilee; and it says in verse 20 of Matthew 11, "Then began He to upbraid the cities in which most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. 'Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would've repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto, it'll be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell or Hades. For if the mighty works which had been done...have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained till this day."

Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, you know enough to be responsible. Terrible judgment. It'll be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you. If you think Sodom and Gomorrah got it, you haven't seen anything. Listen, the people in those three little cities of Chorazin, Capernaum, and Bethsaida were favored by God, because therein did the...did the Messiah most of His miracles. In fact, do you know that in Matthew 4, it tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ made His home in Capernaum?...I would have to say that, of all the places that I have been in the world, one of the most lovely places I have ever been is at the Sea of Galilee; and one of the most absolutely beautiful spots that you could ever imagine to build a city, one of the most lovely places you could ever imagine to live, would be right in that area where Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida were. Dean Ferrar says, "There were no such trees and no such gardens anywhere in Palestine as in the land of the Gennesareth." That's that area.

Josephus in a passage of glowing admiration after describing the sweetness of its winters, the delicate temperature of its air, its palms and vines and grapes and figs and almonds and pomegranates and warm springs, says, "The seasons seem to compete for the honor of its possession." End quote. The days of Jesus, it was a thickly populated area, as well as very beautiful area. It slopes up from the north end of the Sea of Galilee. It's absolutely a...just a gorgeous area. Four main roads converge. The roads going from Egypt north; the roads going to the east. Everything crisscrossed right there by Galilee. It was a fabulous place to live. Nowhere like it...

I was there a few months ago. There is no Chorazin. There is no Bethsaida. There is no Capernaum. They were wiped out. Historians tell us they were destroyed in an earthquake in 400 AD. They came crashing down. Several attempts had been made to try to rebuild it. King Akbahyeed, king of Damascus around 700 AD tried and failed. I thought to myself the first time I visited it some years ago when I stood at Capernaum, "Why doesn't somebody build a hotel here?"

Why doesn't somebody build a city here? This is absolutely beautiful." The rippling waters of the Sea of Galilee, the mountains surrounding, the hills just covered with growing things, breezes, brilliant sun, climate like no other in the world. You know who lives in Capernaum? One little old monk who mans the Catholic church that marks the spot. Jesus said, "You three cities are gonna be wiped out." They're wiped out. They've found some stones. They've picked up some of the pieces of Capernaum and stacked them up so you can go and see. What has to be one of the most perfect places to build a city, there's nothing there but a pile of rocks and one little monk. That's it.

You wanna know something interesting? On the shore of Galilee, there's another city. That city is called Tiberius. You say, "Well, by this time, all the old cities have passed away." You know, Tiberius was there when Jesus was there, and Tiberius is still there? I stayed in Tiberius. Tiberius is growing. It has some of the most beautiful hotels imaginable. Tiberius is a fabulous city. It's still there, 2,000 years later. Watch this - 985 towns were destroyed by the Romans. Those cities were finally wiped out by the earthquake. Tiberius is still there. Why? Because Jesus didn't say it would be destroyed. He picked out the right cities. He never makes a mistake. All you have to do is stand on the ground of Tiberius and look at the spot where Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum might be, and you know that God wrote the Bible.

Well, if you added all of these prophecies together like Peter Stoner did - he took 11 prophecies, and he's a mathematician, so he figured out the probability of all 11 coming to pass by accident. I've only given you about nine. He said the possibility of 11 coming to pass, and he picked a certain 11, was one in 5.76 times 10 to the 59th power. The odds are absolutely incredible that these things could happen by chance; but they didn't happen by chance, which obviously they didn't. They happened because somebody ordered 'em. If somebody ordered them, somebody's up there. Then, you know, I just fall over when some pea brain comes along and says, "Well, I believe in evolution."...I believe in God. I have to to maintain my sanity...

And, you know, as you look around today, prophecy is still coming to pass, isn't it? My, we see the things that are forming in the world around us as we anticipate the coming of our blessed Lord Christ...and I see God being vindicated in the past, the present, yet to be in the future. I praise Him for prewritten history, because it proves that He wrote this Book. Let's pray.

Father, we're so thankful for...Your revelation to us. We thank You that You have disclosed Yourself to us, revealed the truth of Your existence to us...We thank You for the clear witness as we study and examine history, science, archeology. Testimony of all of these things just echoes through the ages of time and space. God is alive. This Book is His Book. Father, give us a new and a fresh confidence in this Book. Help us to know what treasure we hold in our hands, the blueprint of the past, the present, and the future. Oh, what a treasure it is. May we cherish it. May we obey it. May we proclaim it. May we exalt the God who is the only source of all of this truth by living a life obedient to His will for us. Thank You for being the great God who made all of these things, who rules the

world, and, yet, the God who lives within us and loves us. We pray that tonight, You would even draw some to Yourself by faith in Christ, that You might be glorified in the truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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