

Biblical Inspiration Validated By Prophecy, Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-328

Now, for tonight, we are going to continue our look at biblical inspiration. This is a little bit more like a classroom than it is a preaching event. I want you to think through with me some of the passages of Scripture that speak to the issue of fulfilled prophecy.

The fact that the Bible contains prophecies that are fulfilled already in history is an indication that God is the author of Scripture. One of the strongest indications, I believe, that Scripture is inspired by God is the fact that it is absolutely accurate and demonstrates divine omniscience with regard to future events. There is nothing more true of all humanity than that we cannot predict the future. We cannot predict the future. We are abysmal at predicting the future. It is impossible for us to predict the future. I remember a few weeks before I came here to be the pastor of Grace Community Church back in February of 1969, not long before that, United States Space Agency was making its efforts to place a man on the moon. And a gentleman was invited to speak here at Grace Church, a pastor who had been preaching for many years, and he came on a Sunday night and he preached on the subject, "Why God will never allow man to reach the moon." And he had what he thought were all kinds of biblical reasons for that viewpoint. Well obviously he was wrong and shortly after that he made that terrible error in judgment and discernment, he was proven to be wrong and for all that I know that was really the end of people's confidence in him.

We are unable to declare the future. But God is able because God knows everything and because God writes history and therefore He writes the future. Prophecy really, as we look at it tonight, is going to consider that aspect of God's omniscience which causes Him to be able to accurately predict the future. This aspect of prophecy we're going to look at is going to be a declaration of future events. Prophecy is a big word and it can have a lot of meanings. But we're going to use the word in the sense of predicting the future. Prophecy can be from the Greek verb *prophemi*, to speak before or to speak on behalf of someone, or to speak of things before they actually happen. And we're going to be looking at it in that sense.

Prophecy is never just a good guess. It is never conjecture. It is never partially accurate. It is always unknowable, unpredictable. It always has multiple contingencies and features that cannot be controlled and cannot be known so that as you look into the future and hear God say something is going to happen that has manifold elements to it, you have convincing proof of the divine authorship of Scripture. We can probe into the past by means of the science of historiography, if you will, the study of history. We can delve into the past. And we can do a fairly good job of reconstructing the

past. But even when we look at the past there's a lot of disagreement about many, many things and in the world today if you've been educated in the more recent years, you have heard often about revisionist history, efforts to rewrite history from a completely different viewpoint. We have a difficult time, we are fairly successful of being scientific about reassembling the elements of the past, and getting a pretty good idea of what happened in the past. But we have no such means to determine what will happen in the future and no faculty of pre-science or pre-knowledge about what has not occurred. I'm not talking about being able to read about a trend in business because you can discern the way the economy is going. I'm not talking about being able to predict a certain election, political election because you can sense or you can read or you can discern and assess the elements that are going to come into play in that event. We're not talking about those kinds of things. We're talking about specific prophecies with multiple components that are equally specific.

We shouldn't be surprised that the Bible can do this. We shouldn't at all be surprised because it makes so many times the claim of divine omniscience. Hear the words from Isaiah 46 verses 9 and 10, "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. There is no one like Me. I can tell you the ending while we're still at the beginning. And I can tell you from ancient times the things that have not yet happened." No one had this ability but God...not even those supposed prophets and prognosticators...Nostradamus, others that have come along in history. I think back a few years, the Jean Dixon and Edgar Casey. And then there are even the more modern quasi religious quasi Christian predictors of the future who give their nebulous prophecies and frequently specific prophecies that turn out to be wrong. There is no one who can know the future but the one who controls the future. There is no one who can tell us what will happen before it has happened except God. No man, no demon can predict specific events or persons who will appear on the scene in the future and carry out certain actions, only God knows that.

And it is such an important element of biblical literature because some have estimated about one fourth of the Bible is prophetic, about one fourth of the Bible is prophetic. Some scholars feel that even more than that, moving in the direction of a third of Scripture is prophetic. Now as far as a standard for true prophecy, let me take you in to the Old Testament. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 18...Deuteronomy chapter 18. We have to lay a bit of a foundation and then we'll look at some of the prophecies. We'll do that tonight and also next Sunday night, as well. But in Deuteronomy chapter 18...I'm sorry, chapter 18, yes, verse 20, we read this, "But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die." The death sentence then is pronounced upon a prophet who speaks a word presumptuously as if it comes from God when it does not. Or who speaks a word coming from some other supposed god than the one true and living God. This was to bring about his execution.

Verse 21, "And you may 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 come about, or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of him." That is you shouldn't be intimidated by him because he's telling you a lie. If it doesn't come to pass, it doesn't come from God. If it's not accurate, the prophet is to be executed.

Turn over in your Bible to the forty-first chapter of Isaiah...Isaiah chapter 41, and we're going to be bouncing around a little bit to cover this subject tonight. In Isaiah chapter 41 we'll look down at verse 21. "Present your case...the Lord says, Isaiah 41:21...present your case, the Lord says, bring forward your strong argument the King of Jacob says." Verse 22, "Let them bring forth and declare to us what is going to take place." They claim to be prophets, they claim to speak for God. All right, bring your case. "Bring it forth, declare to us what is going to take place. As for the former events, declare what they were. Tell us what has happened in the past just because you're omniscient and you know it, tell us what will happen in the future. Do this that we may consider them and know their outcome, or announce to us what is coming. Declare the things that are going to come afterward that we may know that You are God's.

Here's the test. Tell us all about what has happened because You're omniscient about the past. And tell us all that will happen because You're also omniscient about the future. This, by the way, was a challenge to the Babylonian seers, the Babylonian wise men, the Babylonian prophets, the ones who were supposed to be able to discern the future. Tell us and if you can't, verse 24 says, you are of no account, your work amounts to nothing, he who chooses you is an abomination. And again the test is if you tell us the truth, it comes from God...if you don't, it does not and you are a false prophet worthy of death.

Chapter 43 of Isaiah and we'll look at verse 9. "All the nations have gathered together in order that the peoples may be assembled it...assembled. Who among them can declare this and proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified or let them hear and say it is true." You test them, first of all, by their knowledge of the past without books, without records. If they know truth beyond what is observable, they should be able to know the past. Verse 10, "You are My witnesses, declares the Lord, My servant whom I have chosen in order that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, there will be none after Me...even I, I am the Lord, there is no Savior besides Me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed and there was no strange God among you so you are My witnesses, declares the Lord, and I am God." God is saying you know that I speak the truth and therefore you know that I am God. Bring these other people and put them to the test of their knowledge of both the past and the future to see if their claim to speak for me as prophets is legitimate.

Jeremiah also deals with this in the twenty-eighth chapter of Jeremiah. Just briefly looking at these verses, you can look at them in detail later. Verse 9 of Jeremiah 28, "The prophet who prophesies of

peace when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then that prophet will be known as one whom the Lord has truly sent." Again when he prophesies and it comes to pass, you know that he was sent by the Lord. So the test for a true prophet was that what he prophesied came to pass, that he knew because God had revealed that knowledge to him.

Now in the Scripture there are many prophecies. The first one appears in Genesis 3:15 where we read that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head...the seed of the woman would destroy Satan. The woman does not have the seed, the seed is in the man. But there was one woman in human history who had a seed within her body apart from a man depositing that seed there and that was the virgin Mary and it was she who produced the Son that crushed the head of Satan. Therein lies the first prophecy in the Bible and it is fulfilled specifically in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ through a virgin...a virgin-born man.

Some Bible scholars have said there are as many as a thousand different prophecies in the Scripture, all relating to future history and many of them have already been fulfilled. The Bible lays out prophecies regarding people and kings and cities and nations and even prophecies that touched the wider world. And to just show you how replete the Scripture is with prophetic truth, there are 20 consecutive chapters of prophecy in Isaiah. There are seventeen consecutive chapters of prophecy in Jeremiah, nine in Ezekiel, two in Amos, and it goes that way through all the rest of the prophets. Doom is predicted for Ammon, for Moab, for Edom, for Philistia, for Babylon, for Tyre, for Sidon and for many other places, doom which came to pass already in history. The record is already written.

In the New Testament there are prophecies in the gospels covering cities in the land of Israel, prophecies which have already come to pass regarding those cities. The record of absolute accurate fulfillment without error through all the centuries stands and while it has been assailed by critics, it has suffered not at all. No matter how hard the critics try, they cannot find a biblical prophecy that did not come to pass the way it was said to happen. And the prophets who wrote didn't really even understand fully what they were writing. That takes us back to that important statement in the first chapter of 1 Peter, "As to this salvation...verse 10...the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating." They were actually studying their own prophecies concerning the Messiah to try to understand what it was that they were writing. For example, Isaiah predicted that a king would come and that that king's name would be Cyrus. And Isaiah said there would come a king named Cyrus and he will release Israel from its Babylonian captivity. Isaiah gave us his name 150 years before he was even born. And that is found in Isaiah 44:28...Isaiah 44:28.

A passage that is striking for its simplicity and its accuracy, 1 Kings chapter 13 and verse 2. "Came a man of God from Judah...in verse 1...he cried against the altar by the Word of the Lord and said, 'O altar, altar, thus says the Lord, behold a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you and human bones

shall be burned on you." This is a prophecy regarding a coming king, Josiah, who would bring about the destruction of false teachers. By the way, the prophecy names him three hundred years before he was born. Prophecy does not prove the Bible is the Word of God, but it certainly could prove that it was not the Word of God if it is wrong. But it is never wrong. And this is God's absolute test...search the Scripture, see if these things are so. Our Lord says in Mark 13:23 as He is talking about His Second Coming, "Take heed, behold I have told you all things." He's talking there about the future, the events of His Second Coming and He is essentially saying to them there in Mark 13 as in Matthew 24 and in Luke 21, when you see these things begin to happen, you know that the day of the Lord is near because I have told you all things.

So we have prophecies already given and already fulfilled. Prophecies also given and not yet fulfilled. They will be, however, be fulfilled in the future with the same kind of accuracy that they were fulfilled in the past and if I could throw in a little hermeneutical footnote here, all the prophecies in the past fulfilled in the past were fulfilled literally as they were given. We could therefore assume that all the prophecies related to the future will be fulfilled literally as they were given. They are to be understood in the normal sense that we understand language. And so when it says Christ will come, He will come. When He will come in clouds, He will come in clouds. When He shall place His feet on the Mount of Olives, that's where He'll place His feet. When He establishes a thousand-year Millennium, that means He will establish a thousand-year Millennium. All of those prophecies are to be understood in the normal way that prophecies have always been understood. All of the curses that were pronounced and promised to Israel and that came on Israel are only part of God's plan for Israel. He also promised them blessing for obedience. And when they are obedient, they will be blessed and it will be the same national Israel that will be blessed as the same national Israel was once cursed. You cannot have the curses fall literally on Israel and as the amillennialists would suggest, have all of the promises fall on the church. There's no way to divide that hermeneutic. The prophecies of the Bible in the future will be understood the way the ones in the past have been understood and so at the end of the age as the signs begin to escalate toward the day of the Lord, they will be interpreted the way you would interpret all the rest of the prophecy that Scripture lays out.

Let's look at some illustrations of this. Ezekiel chapter 26...Ezekiel chapter 26, I'm going to move rapidly so that we can cover a few of these prophecies. A lot of these I have some notes in the footnotes in the MacArthur Study Bible that will help fill out the things that I don't have time to say. You can check those sources and others in the commentaries written on these various prophetic books. But for us, we'll get a good idea of the amazing fulfillment of these prophecies. Ezekiel chapter 26 through chapter 28 and even some comments in chapter 9 are prophecies against a city named Tyre...T-y-r-e. These are prophecies against a city named Tyre. It is identified in the second verse, mentioned there Tyre, verse 2. Now the prophecies start in verse 3, "Behold, I am against you, O Tyre. I will bring up many nations against you as the sea brings up its waves, nation after nation after nation hitting against Tyre like waves hitting against the shore." And here come the details. "They will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers and I will scrape her debris from her and make

her a bare rock. She will be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea for I have spoken, declares the Lord God, and she will become spoil for the nations." Go down to verse 8. "He will slay your daughters on the mainland with the sword and He will make siege walls against you, cast up a mound against you and raise up a large shield against you." Go down to verse 12, "They will make a spoil of your riches, a prey of your merchandise, break down your walls, destroy your pleasant houses, throw your stones and your timbers and your debris into the water." Verse 14, "I will make you a bare rock. You will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more for I, the Lord, have spoken declares the Lord God." Verse 21, "I shall bring terrors on you and you will be no more. Thou you will be sought, you will never be found again, declares the Lord God."

Now the elements of this prophecy are really very, very detailed. The prophecy says the mainland city of Tyre will be destroyed. The prophecy says many nations will rise against Tyre, they'll come successively, not all at once collectively together as one force but like waves, one after another. It says that the rubble of that city will be thrown into the water. It says that Tyre will become like a bare flat rock. It says that fishermen shall dry their nets there. It says Tyre will never be rebuilt again. And there are even other details that I read you about casting a siege and breaking down the walls of that place.

Now you have to understand that when Ezekiel makes this prophecy, you're not talking about some small town here. You're talking about one of the greatest cities in the ancient world, the great Phoenician seaport of Tyre and the Phoenicians were one of the most advanced civilizations in ancient times and they were the sailors. They were the ones who sailed the Mediterranean. They were the great traders of the world, the greatest sailors in the world history, the greatest navigators in ancient times. They were the foremost explorers of their day and they were therefore great colonizers.

You find a ruler named Hiram I who controlled the Phoenician world, Phoenicia. This city under his reign, this city of Tyre was fortified with a wall, according to history, 150 feet high, fifteen feet thick. It had a very capable fleet. It was flourishing when Joshua led Israel into the promised land. In fact, Hiram began his reign eight years before Solomon, overlapping David's reign. David sought help from Hiram when David wanted to build his palace and he got artisans and cedars from Hiram to help with the palace. Hiram later aided Solomon when Solomon set out to build the temple by sending cedars down, the cedars of Lebanon.

But this prophecy was given that this great city would be destroyed with all this detail laid out. Three years after the prophecy...three years...Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, laid a siege against the city of Tyre. It lasted from 585 to 573, thirteen years of siege against this city. Finally after thirteen years of being surrounded by the forces of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar and having their supplies cut off, they finally surrendered to the terms and the first part of the prophecy was fulfilled because Nebuchadnezzar immediately broke down all the walls and broke down all the towers, verse 4,

destroying the walls, breaking down all the towers. That made the city indefensible. That was not an unusual thing for conquerors to do, but you can imagine it was a serious enterprise. It doesn't mean you have to break down the entire wall, but you had to render it ineffective by putting massive holes in it at the appropriate places.

Upon arriving, however, he was shocked to find no spoils which was a great disappointment to a conqueror because the people had used their superb fleet to remove everything of value far away, at least far enough away to an island about a half mile off shore. They had just continually over those years been shuttling everything of value off shore. By the way, in the twenty-ninth chapter of Ezekiel verses 17 to 20, Ezekiel says that the Babylonians would get no plunder and they did not get any plunder. So the mainland city was destroyed, it was flattened, it was nothing but rubble, basically. The island city then flourished a half mile off shore. It remained a powerful city, by the way, for 250 years. That was the new city of Tyre.

While during those 250 years the timbers and the stones remained in ruins on the shore for that whole duration. All the prophecy then was not fulfilled, only a portion of it was fulfilled. In the ordinary course of events, those ruins would have become a tell, t-e-l-l, a mound, such as archaeologists find and dig into as the wind-swept dirt covers over the centuries, they bury the rubble of the city. And surely when parts of the wall fell, eventually all the wall fell and normally would have been buried under a tell to be discovered long time later by archaeologists. No one, no one at all would go to the monumental effort of throwing all that debris into the water, but that is exactly what this Scripture says. Verse 12, "They will break down the walls, destroy the pleasant houses, throw your stones and your timbers and your debris into the water." Why would anybody do that? Why would you cart down debris and throw it into the water? Well for 250 years nobody did that, it wasn't fulfilled. Then along came Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great, at this time, is age 24, he is bent on conquering the world. He has come on his way east. He has an infantry we are told that numbers about 33 thousand men and he has about 15 thousand in his cavalry and he is on his way to establish his great world empire. He has just defeated the Persians under Darius III at the battle of Issus in the year 333. He is on his march now to the east and toward Egypt. He wants to conquer the great Egyptian society. In order to get to Egypt, he has to make a bend around the eastern part of the Mediterranean and come down the coast. He comes in to Phoenicia which is now the land of Israel, basically. He calls on the Phoenician cities to open their gates to him and to supply him all the supplies that he needs. And, of course, the first place that he stops as he starts south is that northernmost place called Tyre. He sent word to the Tyrenians of what he wanted and they sent word back and said, "We're not giving you anything."

And so, Alexander was upset. And you don't want to get Alexander the Great upset. It's amazing the lengths that that man would go to achieve the satisfaction of his own agenda. He had no fleet, he had no ships. How in the world was he going to get what he needed from Tyre which was a half mile off shore? Answer? He saw all the debris that had been lying there for 250 years and to make a long

story short, he built a causeway all the way to the island...at least two thousand feet long. And we are told by historians and we can see it because it's still there in part today, at least 200 feet wide across the strait separating the old and the new. Arian, the Greek historian, has written in his book, History of Alexander in India how this was accomplished. And he gives all kinds of fascinating details.

Tyre had become fortified like Alcatraz, surrounded by powerful walls that went right down to the edge of the sea. Really a very impregnable place. So Alexander knew that if he was going to conquer them, he couldn't just go pull up to the wall in ships, he could build ships relatively...that was a relative possibility, but he could only get up to a wall he couldn't get across, so he decided that he would need to build a land peninsula and move massive machines that were very tall with flip-down bridges that he could set on the top of the wall to walk right in to the city. The work went well at first, until the water started getting deeper and deeper and as the water got deeper, the project moved slower and all the people in Tyre stood on the wall and threw boulders at his army, trying to build their causeway.

They stopped the work in order to protect their lives, this only made him more angry. And so he decided that he would build a great shield called a tortoise, for obvious reasons, and that he would hold up the shield. You remember in the passage that I just read you, there is reference made that there would be raised up, in verse 8, a large shield against you. You find that in history. They actually tried to shield the workers from the stones that were being thrown on them. Meanwhile, Alexander's engineers were on the shore building monster towers called Heliopolis...Heliopolis, a hundred and sixty-feet high, twenty stories high. And they held at the top light artillery and men. Highest towers, by the way, ever used in the history of war. High above the city walls, they would just roll them across the causeway when it was finished, drop down the cause...the bridge and march into the city. They were basically resisted and resisted and resisted, raids from the people of Tyre, everything they could do to stop them, it all was for not. In the end, even using some ships that he acquired, he collected the navies from all the local places he could go. He got help from places like Sidon and Biblis(?) and Rhodes and Malous(?) and Lycia and Macedon and Cyprus and he got enough ships to move out into the deep water and continue his building.

Seven months it took him, seven months. At the end of seven months, these monstrous towers rolled across that causeway, flipped down the bridges, went into the city. Eight thousand were slain in the battle, seven thousand were executed military style, thirty thousand were sold as slaves to replenish the treasuries of Alexander. Philip Myer the historian says, "Alexander the Great reduced Tyre to ruins in 332, or 333 B.C. She recovered in a measure but never to the place she previously held in the world. The once great city is now as bare...writes this historian...as the top of a rock and is a place where fishermen dry their nets."

By the way, that island city was repopulated and later restored...destroyed by the Muslims, 1281. The Muslims came, conquering in the name of Allah. But the main city has never been rebuilt and that is consistent with verse 21, "You will never be found again," declares the Lord God. There's a little

village out there on that island. It's in the news in modern times. There's a place where the Israelis have retaliated against refugee camps in past years. Jerusalem has been rebuilt, just for information sake, seventeen times...seventeen times. Twenty-five centuries ago a Jewish prophet in exile in Babylon was told by God that the city of Tyre would never be rebuilt, and it never has. Today you can't even find a ruin on that site.

And frankly, that's astounding to me because the location is staggeringly beautiful, one of the most beautiful spots along the Mediterranean. There's a fresh water spring there that has been measured some years ago that produces a flow of ten million gallons of water a day, enough for a large city. Never been rebuilt. Some mathematicians got a hold of this prophecy, took all of the little parts of this prophecy, put them all together and said, "The probability that this could all happen by chance is one in seventy-five million." That's probably conservative. Amos weighed in on the destruction of Tyre. Turn to Amos chapter 1 verse 9, "Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Tyre and for four, I will not revoke its punishment because they delivered up an entire population to Edom and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood, so I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre and it will consume her citadels." And we know historically that Tyre was literally burned by the missiles of Nebuchadnezzar. In the original attack, Tyre was burned by missiles, fiery arrows fired by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar in the thirteen-year siege.

This is an amazing Scripture until you understand that God wrote this and God told the prophet what the prophet never could have known because God knows exactly what's going to happen because God is in charge of exactly what's going to happen. In the ninth chapter of Zechariah there is more against Tyre, verse 2, there is a word of the Lord against this land, Tyre and Sidon. And then in verse 3, "Tyre build herself a fortress, piled up silver like dust and gold like the mire of the streets," and that was because the Phoenicians out of Tyre were doing this trade all over the Mediterranean area. Also they were trading with the east because the goods coming from the east would come through there to go to the Mediterranean. They were trading with the south, people coming up from Egypt and those coming down from the north, so that they were very, very wealthy. "Behold...says verse 4...the Lord will dispossess her, cast her wealth into the sea. She will be consumed with fire." Again Zechariah noted what was true in the raid or the siege of Nebuchadnezzar that the city was set on fire. Other cities in Phoenicia that became later known as Philistine cities, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, these cities also, including Ashdod in verse 6, would be a part of the prophecy as well.

Going further down the coast...the coast, it's Gaza, Ekron, Ashkelon, Ashdod, they're all going to be captured. They all were captured. And of the five great cities, the only one left out of the prophecy because it was a little bit inland was the city of Gath...the city of Gath.

Josephus, the great historian, records for us in immense detail, and you can read Josephus' history how all these components came to pass. The success of Alexander's evasion of Syria and Palestine in the fourth century is known history in all its detail. He absorbed Syria. Tyre was obliterated. Her

commerce destroyed to the amazement of her neighbors. Interestingly enough, not only was Gath spared in all of this, but another city was spared, the city of Sidon...Sidon did not share the same fate as Tyre.

Let's go back to the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel and look at the city of Sidon. Twin cities, twenty miles north of Tyre is the city in ancient times called Sidon. Now apparently Sidon was the center of Baal worship, the worship of Ashteroth and Tammuz, the capital city, you could say, of idolatry. It had been founded and back in Genesis 10 by one of the sons of Canaan, Genesis chapter 10 verse 15. Now look at 28:22 and let's just see what the Bible says is going to happen to Sidon. Now it says, "The Lord God, behold, I am against you, O Sidon. I shall be glorified in your midst. Then they will know that I am the Lord when I execute judgments in her and I shall manifest My holiness in her, for I shall send pestilence to her and blood to her streets and the wounded shall fall in her midst by the sword upon her on every side, then they will know that I am the Lord."

Three things to point out...blood in the streets, swords everywhere and no ultimate destruction. Unlike Tyre, there's no statement that this city would not survive and today you can go there and find Sidon flourishing as the seaport city of Saida. But you won't find Tyre.

In 351 B.C. the city was ruled by Persia and it revolted and the Persian army besieged it, 351 B.C. When all hope of saving the city was gone, forty thousand citizens chose rather to die than submit to Persian vengeance. So what they did? They shut themselves up in their houses, set their houses on fire and died in the flames. It was a horrific way to die. But the city was rebuilt again and again and again and re-conquered again and again. Floyd Hamilton says, "Blood has flowed in the streets over and over but the city stayed in existence and stands today as a monument to fulfilled prophecy. It was taken three times by the Crusaders, three times by the Muslims, all by the sword. In 1840 it was bombarded by the combined fleets of England, France and Turkey. No human eye could have seen how in the future this city would be in a bloodbath induced by swords, but would never be extinct when one twenty miles down the coast would be extinct." But we aren't surprised because God knows the truth. One writer says, "No well accredited prophecy is found in any other book or even oral tradition now existing or that has ever been existing in the world." You can't find in any religious book in the world a well-attested and accurate fulfilled prophecy. The Bible is always exactly correct about everything.

Maybe I have time for one more. Ezekiel chapter 30, since we're having such a great time doing this. This one, chapter 30, Ezekiel chapter 30, let's go down to verse 13. And this is Egypt, not Tennessee, just for some of you. "Thus says the Lord God, I will also destroy the idols and make the images cease from Memphis and there will no longer be a prince in the land of Egypt and I will put fear in the land of Egypt, I will make Pathros desolate, set a fire in Zoan, and execute judgments on Thebes and I will pour out My wrath on Sin...with an upper case S, proper name...the stronghold of Egypt and I will also cut off the multitude of Thebes..."now we could stop at that point.

What does this say? It says about Memphis that the idols in Memphis will be destroyed. That's unmistakable. "I will destroy the idols and make the images cease from Memphis." It says Thebes will be destroyed, judgments will be executed on Thebes and the multitude will be cut off. That means they will be killed. Thebes destroyed and its population killed. And then that most interesting statement, "That there will no longer be...in verse 13...a prince in the land of Egypt." No more native ruler in Egypt.

Now let's start with Memphis. It was a very ancient and a very important place for the origins of religious worship in Egypt. It was regarded as a very sacred place because of its original religious beginning. It was the capital of what was called middle Egypt and it was the stronghold of religion and therefore the stronghold of idols. And God said it would be destroyed and its idols in particular would be destroyed. And that is exactly what happened to Memphis. The historian Herodotus records that Cambyses did that and he did that by first attacking the city called Sin, verse 15, the stronghold of Egypt, verse 15, "I'll pour out My wrath on Sin, the stronghold of Egypt." It was called Pelusium, the Greek term for it. It was the key to Egypt. It was the stronghold, and if you could break through at that point, you could conquer. Herodotus says that's where Cambyses came in and launched his attack which was successful.

Now the Egyptians were hopeless idolaters. In fact, they mummified cats. They mummified cats...you know about the holy cows in India, well they had holy cats and holy dogs and particularly cats were of interest to them because they had a cat goddess, Ugaset...Ugaset, the cat goddess and all the cats and they were all urchin cats, not domesticated cats. They all were basically the protectors of her honor, so they mummified cats when they died.

Well, Cambyses was pretty shrewd. They also worshiped dogs and so when he launched his attack against Pelusium, he launched it with a whole bunch of cats and dogs. And his army came following the cats and following the dogs. And because the animals were held to be so sacred in Egypt so that no Egyptian would use any weapon against those animals, he came in and won his victory. He slew Apis, the sacred cow and he began to destroy the idols and destroyed them all in Memphis. Memphis disappeared. It began at this point to disappear, its idols disappeared with it. Today archaeologists don't know where Memphis was. Likely it was the second largest city in Egypt and they can't find it.

I've been there, to that site, on one of my trips to Egypt. And I was absolutely fascinated to hear from the guide that there in that region although they do not know exactly where the city was, there in that region they have discovered ancient statues buried face down in the sand that they date before Moses and after. And they find these statues with the face buried in the sand and the back rotted out. The Bible said that the idols of Memphis would be struck down, history says that's exactly what happened.

Then there were to be judgments on Thebes, according to verse 14. Cambyses, this Persian, invaded Egypt, brought destruction on Thebes, burning their temples, destroying all their statutes, but Thebes recovered for a while. Second blow came a century before Christ, 89 B.C. A siege was laid on Thebes for three years and when Thebes fell on that time in 89 B.C., it fell into complete oblivion. It was flattened, nothing left, fulfilling prophecy. Its people were killed, never returned. And again it was an amazing city. History says 66 feet was the height of the wall and 24 feet was the width.

When the Bible says something is going to happen, it's exactly what happens...exactly what happens. God judged that land from the top to the bottom, from Sin all the way to Thebes, top to bottom, and destroyed its idols.

The final prediction was that there would no longer be a prince in the land of Egypt. That would be the son of an Egyptian king. That has been fulfilled. From 350 B.C. and on Egypt has never had an Egyptian as a ruler. The famous rulers that you think about, Sadat, Abdunasser, familiar names, neither of them was an Egyptian. They'll never have an Egyptian ruler, Scripture is accurate about that.

Well there are many more such prophecies but I will save them for next time. Fascinating, isn't it? The Word of God stands. Believe me, the critics would love to dismantle the Scripture on the basis of these things, but they cannot do that. History confirms the truthfulness of the Word of God. Let's pray.

What a blessing and an encouragement it is to our hearts, Lord, to see the Word of God be vindicated by history. Amazing things to think about, but why would we be surprised, this is Your truth and You are God and You are omniscient and You cannot err. We thank You that Your Word has stood the test of scrutiny through the centuries and it still stands firm, accurate. And if it can be trusted in these things, it can be trusted in all that it affirms and declares and teaches and commands and prophesies. And indeed, what You have said will happen has happened and what You have said is yet to happen will happen, just as surely, just as precisely, just as accurately. Your character is at stake and You are the God of truth who knows all things, even the end from the beginning and You can tell us about the things that have not yet happened. We thank You that Your Word is so trustworthy. We trust it spiritually and believing it place our life and our eternity in Your hands, and we do it with joy and confidence because Your Word is true. And we thank You from the depths of our being for giving us this truth, in Christ's name. Amen.

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