

God Speaks To Modern Man

the statement of Jesus: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63.

"Break Thou the bread of life,
Dear Lord, to me,
As Thou did break the loaves
Beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page
I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee,
O living Word!"
MARY A. LATHBURY

19. Are the Prophecies of the Bible Reliable?

A CONVENTION of weather forecasters met in a certain city on a day selected as least likely for rain. It rained. With all the modern means of mapping air pressures, wind direction and velocity, and cold and warm air masses, forecasters often miss the mark.

People have always had a keen interest in knowing about the future. Fortunetellers have plied their trade for ages. A person puzzled by having some female wizard tell him what his name is (most people know their names already), pays out good money for personal readings which purport to be reliable information on his future. Much of it is like the counsel that came from an ancient, oracle to an army general. "A great army would be defeated if, he went into battle. The battle took place. An army was defeated-the general's own army! True, the enemy army might have, been destroyed, but in either case the oracle would be correct. Much of man's prediction is double talk, like that of some radio commentators. Then whatever way it turns out they proclaim their great prophetic ability.

Astrology is another prophetic line fed to Americans at the reported rate of 200 million dollars worth annually, soothing their worries with mumbo jumbo and horoscopes. People pay up to fifty dollars a session to learn how to get rich. One stargazer' is reported to have taken in fifty thousand dollars in one year from Wall Street people.

Top diplomats seek counsel on world affairs. More people just want to know, "Will I get married?" "Will I succeed?" "Where is Henry?" There is everything from business and vocational astrology to radix and sexual astrology.

WHAT ABOUT BIBLE PREDICTIONS?

What can be said for the forecasting of Bible prophets? Is it any better? First of all, what claim is made in Scripture for this type of thing? Does the Bible itself profess prophetic reliability? From Isaiah 42:8, 9 we read the following: I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them."

Then from the New Testament we note this invitation, challenge, and counsel: "Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21.

God asks no man to believe the prophecies of the Bible without testing them, proving them. Then if they stand up, hold fast to them.

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT

Let us first check a prediction made to Abraham more than one thousand years before the days of Isaiah. This would be one of the former things.

We read God's word to Abraham: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. . . . But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again." Genesis 15:13-16.

Here was a prophecy of slavery and deliverance. Abraham died. His grandson, Jacob, with his household went down to Egypt in the days of his son Joseph's high office. From favor and freedom they

fell into disfavor and slavery. Decades went by. The time of predicted deliverance was at hand. A proud Pharaoh, which knew not Joseph, declared, "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Exodus 5:1

Israel was up against a hard and adamant Pharaoh. The king of Egypt was up against a prophecy of God. Who would prevail? God said, "Let my people go." Pharaoh answered, "They stay." As well might man seek to bind in fetters the ebb and flow of the ocean tides or build a wall to stop the stars, as to challenge the power of the word of God. Said Jesus, "The Scriptures must be fulfilled." Mark 14:49.

The fulfillment we read as follows: "It came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." Exodus 12:41.

THE PUZZLE OF EGYPT'S DECLINE

After the time of Isaiah, Ezekiel forecast the Permanent decline of Egypt. This was one of the "new things" declared by God before it sprang forth. Of Egypt, Ezekiel wrote:

"It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations." Ezekiel 29:15.

Egypt was not to disappear. It was to stand on a lower rung of the world ladder. Egypt had been the "granary of the world, the mother of science and letters and art. At the fire which burned upon her hearth, the nations had kindled the lamp of knowledge."

She had been pictured at that time as standing "alone among the nations, great, wise, and self-respecting; around her the choicest treasures of earth; her land filled with imperishable monuments of might and skill and genius; her people, in their order and enlightenment and civilization, a marvel of all time!" When the Mohammedan hosts approached the city of Alexandria centuries later "the sight of its magnificence and wealth filled the children of the East with amazement."

Despite the grandeur and glory that seemed destined for unending ages, decay and disintegration have ravaged both people and objects. "The hopeless bondage of centuries has quenched every spark of ambition in the breasts of the descendants of the Pharaohs; and under the iron heel of oppression, genius and talent, and even intellect itself, seem to have been extinguished," says one writer. Modern Egypt is awakening along with all the nations, but the glory of world empire no nation can gain again.

Thus God's declarations are fulfilled both specifically and generally. "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." Isaiah 46:9, 10.

THE EBB TIDE OF TYRE

Tyre means "rock," and the city got its name from the double rock off the eastern Mediterranean coast, which was the supposed site of the first settlement. The historian Herodotus traces its traditional history over two thousand years before the time of the prophecy concerning Tyre.

Tyre, the beautiful, had grown until she was known as "mistress of the sea." Rich with "the fine gold of Tarshish, the precious stones of Aram, . . . the beautiful ivories of Damascus, the fine linen of Egypt, . . . the perfumes of Sheba, the slaves of Javan," she was the rival of Rome, and "the commercial center of the world."

At the very time when the tide of her power and glory was at its flood, around 600 BC, the prophet Ezekiel lifted his voice in warning from God: "I will also scrape her dust from her." "And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water.... and I will make you like the top of a rock: you shall be a place to spread nets upon; you shall be built no more: for I the Lord have spoken it, said the Lord God." Ezekiel 26:4, 12-14.

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took the city after a thirteen-year siege, breaking down buildings and walls and slaying the people in savage fury. Yet the ruins remained. Tyre had not had her timbers and stones thrown into the sea, nor her dust scraped to the top of the rock foundation. Concerning the final fulfillment, Earle Rowell says:

"Two and a half centuries passed, and still the ruins stood, a challenge to the accuracy of prophecy. Then through the East the fame of Alexander the Great sent a thrill of terror. He marched swiftly to attack new Tyre, 332 BC. Reaching the shore, the city he had come to take, with half a mile of water between them, for it was built upon an island. Alexander's plan of attack was speedily formed and

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vigorously executed. He took the walls, towers, timbers, and ruined houses and palaces of ancient Tyre, and with them built a solid causeway to the island city. So great was the demand for material that the very dust was scraped from the site and laid in the sea.” - *Prophecy Speaks*, p. 20.

Though the judgments of God may linger, His Word is sure. After the flood tide of fame and riches and power and glory, Tyre the beautiful became but a lonely barren rock for the stretching of fishermen’s nets, when her tide ebbed and prophecy was fulfilled.

“Who is like me? Let him come forward with his claim, let him state out his case before me. Who foretold the future long ago? Pray let us hear what is still to be? Fear nothing, dread not in the days to come; have not I foretold it and announced it long ago? You are my witnesses whether there is any god, any power at all besides me.” Isaiah 44:7, 8, Moffatt.

THE MIRACLE OF THE JEW

Frederick, the king of Prussia, asked a leading preacher of his country this question: “Tell me what is the greatest evidence that the Bible is inspired?”

Without a moment’s hesitation this prince of the pulpit replied, ‘The Jews, Your Majesty, the Jews!’

The gifts of God to the Jews, and thereby the gifts of the Jews to the world, are indeed very considerable.

Worshippers of our God, the Creator, depositaries of the Ten Commandments on tables of stone, observers of the weekly Sabbath of the fourth commandment as the sign of their allegiance to their Creator, believers in the coming of the Messiah as a great deliverer, the Jews were designed to be a blessing to all the world, and their Temple of worship a “house of prayer for all people.” Isaiah 56:7.

One of the greatest Christian Jews who ever lived put it in these words: “What advantage then bath the Jew? ... Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God”; “who are Israelites. To whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” Romans 3:1,2; 9:4, 5.

PROMISES OF PEACE AND WORLD LEADERSHIP

The God of Israel made bold promises to His people, promises that would appeal to the heart’s deepest desires for peace, quiet, and absence of fear, as well as for lawful ambition and the reward of intelligence, diligence, and integrity.

Through Moses, God said to them: “You shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.” If you walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; ... I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid.” Leviticus 19:30; 26:3-6.

Through the prophet Jeremiah there came to the Jews in a time of great spiritual declension, when their love of money had outrun their love of God, these thrilling words of daring promise: ‘It shall come to pass, if you diligently hearken unto me, said the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein. Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, and this city shall remain for ever.’ Jeremiah 17:24, 25.

But it was business first and religion second. So across the bright sky of Israel’s hopeful future scurried the black clouds of trouble and tragedy.

Even the Jewish Prince of Peace must close His ministry of pity and love with words that rumbled a warning of coming destruction and desolation: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that killed the prophets, and stoned them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” Matthew 23:37, 38.

FOUR PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE JEWS FULFILLED

1. To Be Scattered. “If you wilt not observe to do all the words of this law,” “the Lord shall scatter you among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other.” Deuteronomy 28:58, 64.

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“The whole remnant of you will I scatter into all the winds.” Ezekiel 5:10.

“My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.” Hosea 9:17.

Tradesmen, bankers, musicians, publishers, scientists, doctors, writers, and entertainers—the Jews are found all over the world. Someone has said that they drink out of every river in the world from the Ganges to the Mississippi.

The estimated Jewish population was less than 16 million in 1939. And 5 million may have perished in World War II, leaving but 11 million. Yet a traveler would think there were many times that number. Some 5 million reside in the United States. They seem to be everywhere.

2. To Be Despised. “Thou shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead you.” Deuteronomy 28:37. I will ... make them an astonishment, and an hissing.” Jeremiah 25:9.

These prophecies have been fulfilled and continue to be fulfilled before our very eyes and in our very ears. Go any place where Jews in any number dwell, and you will find them a “byword” and a “hissing” among the people. This is true of them as of no other race.

When one first encounters this experience he is shocked at this almost universal spirit to despise the Jew. A leading American questioned a leading Jew, his friend, to learn his explanation of this seeming abnormal feeling. Their friendship cooled. The situation is a delicate one, and in some ways mysterious. One must be on guard lest his own heart join up with the multitude in this uncanny and practically universal attitude to hold in scorn and contempt this extraordinary race of men.

We can attempt no study of the varied intricacies of this baffling problem here. But we may know this: “The Jew received great light from God. He did not live it. He did not give it. He Would accept no additional light. As a depository of the truths of God he was rejected. For nearly two thousand years he has been a byword and a hissing on the lips and tongues of men in fulfillment of the Scripture prophecy. Jesus, the greatest Jew who ever lived, said to the Jews, ‘The scripture cannot be broken.’”

3. To Be Persecuted. “I ... will draw out a sword after you.”

Leviticus 26:33. “And you shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall you eat” (verse 29), declared the God who loved them with “everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3).

Two million of them perished or went into a slavery worse than death when in AD 70 the Roman sword and slaughter broke through the siege of Jerusalem. And before that fateful day, in their desperation they ate the flesh of their own children.

Moses had once led them from Egyptian slavery, but God warned them: “The Eternal will take you back to Egypt ... by a route which I said you would never tread again, and there you shall let yourselves be sold as slaves to your enemies.” Deuteronomy 28:68 Moffatt.

History tells of how they “were brought in droves, and sold as cheap as horses.” (See H. H. MILMAN, *The History of the Jews*, vol. 2, p. 436)

In Egypt many labored in the mines, men and women, young and old, often in chains, driven under the lash until their wasted bodies crumpled under the sheer weight of their burden, and they perished with their last ounce of strength expended in slavish toil. These were the ancient counterpart of the modern slave-labor camps. The rolling wheels of the centuries leave the ugly imprint of their sorrowful story embedded on the tragic trail of time.

Let the historian Milman tell it: “No fanatic monk set the populace in commotion, no public calamity took place, no atrocious or extravagant report was propagated, but it fell upon the heads of this unhappy caste. In Germany the Black Plague raged in all its fury, and wild superstition charged the Jews, as elsewhere, with causing and aggravating the misery and themselves enjoying a guilty comparative security amid the universal desolation. . . .

“The same dark stories were industriously propagated, readily believed, and ferociously avenged, of fountains poisoned, children, crucified. . . . Oppressed by the nobles, anathematized by the clergy, hated as rivals in trade by the burghers in the commercial cities, despised and abhorred by the populace, their existence is known by the chronicle . . . of their massacres.” *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 222, 223.

In our day the tide of their terror has risen to new heights. “It is known that in Poland under the Nazis eighty thousand were murdered in one night.” - *America*, October 13, 1945, p. 32.

In World War II thousands were shot, hanged, or beheaded one by one. Hosts were enslaved,

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worked, starved, or beaten to death. They were put to death in gas chambers, burned in stacks, buried in huge mass graves. The Nazi call to exterminate the Jew brought destruction to the reported estimate of 5 million.

No modern picture can surpass in perfection of detail the one painted by the prophetic hand of Moses, their great leader at the time of their first deliverance. Warning against disobedience, he predicted: "The Lord shall scatter you. . . . And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes; and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall fear day and night." Deuteronomy 28:64-66.

The terrific tension of their lives as a result of persecution is given in this striking and pitiful picture: "You shall be utterly crushed and broken continually, till you are driven mad by the sight of it all." Deuteronomy 28:33, 34, Moffatt.

4. To Be Indestructible. Although they were to be scattered, despised, and persecuted, they were not to die out as a people. Though God said, I will break this people . . . as one breaks a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again" (Jeremiah 19:11), yet they were not to disappear.

"Thus said the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night . . . : if those ordinances depart from before me, said the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." Jeremiah 31:35, 36.

H. L. Hastings wrote: "Scattered through every land and in every clime; mingled among all people; adapting themselves to all circumstances, climates, conditions, and governments, and though oppressed and scorned and spurned, yet ever rising to honor when the pressure of persecution is removed. Going from the prison house of Egypt to ride in the chariot of Pharaoh, and from among the children of the captivity to sit in the high places of Babylon and Persia. Gaining influence, winning wealth, obtaining power, and defying competition; more prolific, orderly, temperate, healthy, and long-lived than any other race. More numerous, wealthy, and influential today, after eighteen hundred years of dispersion and oppression, than they were in the calmest days of David and Solomon-the historian, the patriot, and philosopher cannot fail to observe in the existence of this scattered nation a phenomenon well worthy of the most careful consideration."- *Will the Old Book Stand?* p. 225.

Michael Beer, one of their own writers, says: "Braving all kinds of torments, the pangs of death, and still more terrible pangs of life, we have withstood the impetuous storm of time, sweeping indiscriminately in its course nations, religions, and countries, . . . like a column left standing amid the wreck of worlds and ruins of nature. The history of our people connects present times with the first ages of the world, by the testimony it bears to the existence of those early periods. It begins at the cradle of mankind; it is likely to be preserved to the very day of universal destruction." - *The Jewish Problem*, pp. 54, 55.

SUMMING IT UP

The descendants of Abraham went into Egyptian slavery as God predicted to Abraham, and came out at the time forecast.

Egypt went into permanent decline to become one of the "basest," or less significant of nations, as foretold by Ezekiel the prophet, never to regain her former place of greatness.

Tyre, mistress of the sea as Babylon was of the land, was to become but a barren rock, scraped clean of soil, a place for fishermen to dry their nets, and it is even so. Ezekiel the prophet was right.

The disobedient Jews were to be a scattered people among the nations, taunted and despised, living under persecution and fear and tribulation, yet as indestructible as the Book that records with unerring accuracy the prophecies set forth concerning them. The majority of Jews have no desire to return to Palestine.

Bible prophecy is God's challenge. "Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods." Isaiah 41:23.

"I am the Lord. . . . Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isaiah 42:8, 9.

Prophecy is a distinctive badge of Bible inspiration and reliability. It is more sure than eyesight, and is God's great light to guide us till the rising of the Daystar (2 Peter 1:16, 19).