

Bible Study Lectures

04. PROPHECY, THE BIBLE'S ACID TEST

The Bible inspires faith; Prophecy reveals it as the Word of God; Skeptics challenged.

SPEAKING on the subject, "Prophecy, the Bible's Acid Test," in the Naval Hall, on Tuesday night, Pastor Mitchell said that the truthfulness of the Bible can be demonstrated just as accurately as any problem in geometry, or any of the branches of mathematics. "There is one definite way of testing the accuracy of the Bible. There is one way of knowing with absolute certainty whether the Bible has been inspired by the omniscient God of the universe, or is merely the writings of good men. You can know the certainty of this," said Mr. Mitchell "just as surely as you can be certain of the correct total of a column of figures."

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

"Now here is the scientific method of testing the Bible," he said. "In the study of geometry or arithmetic we commence with simple statements first. So with the testing of the Scriptures.

"Firstly, let us note this fact that will be readily grasped. No man, no matter how wise he be, can foretell with absolute accuracy events of tomorrow, of next year, of next century, or next millennium. No human wisdom can predict with positive certainty what the condition of cities, countries and peoples will be in a thousand years time. It is beyond the power of finite men to produce scores of hundreds of such prophecies. "Now," said the speaker, "our foundation so far is axiomatic, it needs no proof. Everybody knows that his brain is not capable of hundreds of forecasts into the dim and distant future with unerring accuracy. We need no text-books so far. However, here is one statement from a modern historian: 'History has yet made so slight progress toward the scientific basis that she is able to foretell nothing that is to be hereafter. As to the future she is stone blind. There is not a philosopher in the world who can forecast the historical evolution to the extent of a single day. The tallest son of the morning can neither foretell nor foresee the nature of what is to come in the year that already stands knocking at the door.'" John Clark Ridpath, in 'Christian at Work,' December 17, 1894.

"BIBLE ABOUNDS IN PROPHECY"

"Now our second step," continued the lecturer, "is the production of evidence that the Bible literally abounds in prophecy. Some 333 prophecies foretold him hundreds of years beforehand the life, work and death of Christ, from the cradle to the grave. Every one of those predictions, without a single exception, was fulfilled to the minutest detail. Scores of additional prophecies foretold the fate of cities, towns, countries, and nations, from hundreds of years before Christ, down to our day. Approximately 300 prophecies were to herald the second coming of Christ have been fulfilled."

"Our third step will be ascertained as we investigate namely, that these prophecies are not like the ancient Delphic oracles that were so worded that they could not possibly go wrong. No, the prophets of Scripture make frank statements which time would prove to be true or false.

"The fourth link in our scientific test of the accuracy of the Bible is the conclusion. The Bible contains many hundreds of true prophecies which the span of time, from nearly three and a half millenniums ago to our day, has proved to be absolutely true. Not one has been found to be false. Therefore, inasmuch as such a stupendous task accomplished with unerring accuracy is beyond the mentality, of human beings, the power that inspired the Bible is of necessity superhuman-it is divine, it is of God."

GOD'S CHALLENGE TO SCEPTICS

Isaiah 41:21-23 was cited as showing that God challenges critics and skeptics to forecast future events. "Who can accept the challenge?" the speaker questioned. Mr. Mitchell stated that "no one knows what will happen tomorrow morning." He referred to his being in New Zealand at the time the city of Napier was wrecked by an earthquake. Twenty-four hours before, no one knew that the earthquake tragedy was about to wreck the city. Isaiah 46:9, 10 revealed the fact that God alone was able to declare the end from the beginning.

2 Peter 1:16-21 was cited as teaching that prophecy was evidence more reliable than one's eyesight or bearing. The nineteenth verse was read: "We have also a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn,

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and the Day star arise in your hearts!” Commenting on the power to shine in a dark place, the speaker graphically described his visit to the glow-worm grotto in the Waitoma Caves, New Zealand. He said that in a certain section of those world-famed caves, which are now lighted by electricity, there is a certain place where the visitors step into a boat that is pulled over a small underground lake of water, during which time the lights in that section are turned off, and one marvels, in looking upward, at the spectacle of a grotto studded with hundreds of sparkling glow worms shining as jewels of light studding the roof of the grotto. The government has built a large hostel to accommodate those who come from far and near to see this wonderful sight—truly a mystic light in a dark place. “So,” it was declared, “the prophecies of sacred Scripture are the lights that light up the hidden future. Men converse, and question, and wonder, but the prophet-light emanating from God’s Word alone lights up the way!”

BIBLE EVIDENCE OVERWHELMING

The power of the prophecies to convince the honest doubter was illustrated by reading the testimony of E. A. Rowell, a converted infidel, who since his conversion has lectured for years to hundreds of thousands: “If you had been reared an infidel; if your father and mother were skeptics; if your reading on religious subjects consisted of the writings of Tom Paine, Robert Ingersoll, Voltaire, Hume, and other vaunting doubters, no one would expect you to be turned easily to a belief in the Bible. Such was my case. I began to read the Bible in order to refute its claims to be the Word of God. Against my will, and to my amazement and deep chagrin, I found the evidence in the Bible itself to be so overwhelmingly convincing, that I was compelled to believe it. Perhaps you have been told, as I was, that a person must shut his eyes and take the Bible on faith, wholly against his reason. Yet I read therein the invitation, ‘Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord.’ Isaiah 1:19. Even to my sceptical mind this appeared to be a fair proposition; and it was utterly contrary to what my training had led me to expect.

“The Bible invited examination. Pursuing my investigation, I found that we are instructed how to proceed in studying the truth of the Bible: ‘Despise not prophesying; prove all things; hold fast that which is good.’ 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21. Equally with Paine and Ingersoll, I had despised prophecy as clumsy guesswork; but the challenge of the Bible to test its prophecies was certainly reasonable. Nothing could be fairer.

“Nothing now remained for me but to follow the Bible instruction to prove all things pertaining to its prophecies. To disprove a false literal prophecy is the easiest thing in the world. We are now nearly nineteen hundred years this side of the latest Bible writing; and as the Bible made predictions concerning all nations that existed at the time it was written, and concerning some that were to arise many centuries later,

I was amazed, dumfounded, overwhelmed, at the scores, even hundreds of minute, fearless prophecies reaching not a few years, but hundreds, yes, even thousands of years, into the future. The Bible speaks more certainly of the future than any historian ever spoke of the past, with all his records before him. The Bible chronicles the future as if it were past, with sure and certain knowledge.

“I read from Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel relative to every known country from their day to the end of history. The daring of these prophets takes one’s breath away. In a few brief sentences, for instance, they declared that the mighty empire of Babylon, then in the heyday of its glory, would cease to exist, be absolutely forgotten, molded to dust, not be inhabited from generation to generation, be desolate for ever, and in many similar expressions stated in absolute terms the completeness of Babylon’s annihilation. These prophets burned all bridges in their predictions. The reward was nothing of the Delphic oracle style in their utterances. If the thing did not happen there could be no explaining it away.

“UNERRINGLY STATED FACTS”

“These prophets, with never a single mistake in hundreds of prophecies, unerringly stated the facts. From the lecture platform, before thousands of men and women, I have challenged anyone to point out a single instance in which the prophet said that a people, a city, or a nation was to be destroyed utterly, and that people, city, or nation is in existence today. Nineveh, Tyre, Babylon, Assyria, and scores of others are in the exact state the Bible said they would be in. In years of public lectures, not once did anyone accept the challenge. On the other hand, I have challenged anyone to name a city, a people, or a nation which the Bible said would continue, that has ceased to exist. Again no one attempted to dispute the Bible, or could show a single mistake.

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“I proved the prophecies. They cover all the earth’s surface—every nation and tribe and tongue and people—and all time until its close; and in all its predictions I have never found a mistake. The fulfillment of prophecy, therefore, is the one outstanding reason why I believe the Bible. If you had been reared an infidel, would not these tested prophecies convince you that the Bible is what it claims to be? They convinced me. They have convinced many others.”

Mr. Mitchell stated that he had been trained from childhood to believe, and therefore he preferred to cite the experience of those who had been trained to disbelieve but later made a thorough examination of the Scriptures, and found that to be honest they had to acknowledge the Bible to be the Word of God. He promised to distribute free of charge the publication from which he read this experience to those who so requested.

A concluding experience was cited from H. L. Hastings’s work, “Will The Old Book Stand?” page 20. Hastings writes: “Years ago I talked with an infidel in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and he wanted me to give him some evidence that the Bible was true. After some conversation, I lent him a little volume, an abridgement of “Keith on Prophecy.” Some ten years after, as I took my seat in a railway train, he came and sat down beside me and began to talk, and he said: ‘If you want that book, you can have it; but no one else can have it at any price.’ It had knocked his infidelity into atoms, and he was a believer in Christ, and a member of the church.”

05. THE WITNESS OF SCEPTICS

The witness of skeptics to the truth of the Bible was the subject of an address given by Pastor Mitchell in the Naval Hall on Thursday night. It was stated that the Bible contained at least fifty clear-cut predictions concerning the land of Syria, over forty of Babylon, and that Samaria, Chaldea, Egypt, Ashkelon, Caanan, Amman, Lebanon, Tyre and other nations, countries, cities, and towns were the subject of definite Bible prophecies all couched in plain language that could not be misunderstood, and that time had proved them to be fulfilled to an exactitude.

Mr. Mitchell stated that it was unnecessary to appeal to existing facts to know the truth of these prophecies, and, lest skeptics should question the truthfulness of his witnesses, he would depend for his historical facts principally upon skeptical travelers and writers, such as C. F. Volney, the learned French skeptical writer, and others.

Many prophecies were cited, and quotations from modern writers were read “to show that existing conditions are identical with what the Scriptures foretold,” said the speaker.

Among other pictures of Syria Isaiah 32:14 was cited: “The forts and towers shall be dens for ever.” Then the following was read from Volney’s, “Travels” page 336 “At every step we met with ruins of towers, dungeons, and castles with fosses. Frequently inhabited by Jackals, owls, and scorpions.”

Jeremiah 26: 18 was cited as predicting: “Zion shall be ploughed like a field.” The record of the truth of this prophecy was cited from the historian Gibbon, Volume IV, page 100: “After the final destruction of the temple by the armies of Titus and Hadrian, a ploughshare was drawn over the consecrated ground as a sign of perpetual interdiction!”

Richardson in his “Travels” was also cited as saying: “At the time when I visited this sacred spot [Mount Zion], one part of it supported a crop of barley; another was undergoing the labor of the plough.”

It was stated that Volney in his “Travels,” Volume 2, page 338, refers to the, “deserted ruins of Azkalan.” Zephaniah 2:4 was read: “Ashkelon shall be a desolation,” and Zechariah 9:5, “Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.”

THE WITNESS OF BABYLON

Speaking of Babylon, it was shown from Isaiah and Jeremiah that Babylon, then in the height of her glory, would “become heaps,” that there would be “nothing of her left,” that she would be utterly destroyed. What is the witness of those who have visited that part of the world? It was asked. The following were cited: “Vast heaps constitute all that now remains of ancient Babylon.” (Keppel’s “Narrative,” Vol. I, page 196) “Nothing is now left but heaps of earth and fragments of brick,” was cited from Mi gnan’s “Travels,” pages 199, 200.

Another prophecy concerning Babylon was read from Isaiah 13:20: “It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there. Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.” Mr. Mitchell commented on this daring prophecy; but he