

Know Your Bible

saving human souls for His eternal kingdom! Shall we not be more faithful in the part He has allowed us to play in human redemption?

The Lord takes these various gifts of heart and hand and makes them His very own. He uses them as effectually in His work as if they were the direct touch of His own heart and hand. By the power of the Holy Spirit these gifts become channels of salvation for the lost whom we may not personally see or reach.

God does not accept money as a satisfaction for transgression. All the riches of the wealthy are not sufficient to cover a single sin. We cannot earn God's favor nor bring merit to our souls through the payment of money into His treasury. Not by human works or deeds of righteousness are men saved. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation [doings, or conduct of life]; . . . but with the precious blood of Christ." 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

In wondrous entreaty our heavenly Father speaks to you and to me: My child, I still have windows in heaven. They are yet in service. The bolts slide as easily as of old. The hinges have not grown rusty. I would rather fling them open and pour forth than keep them shut and hold back. I opened them for Moses, and the sea parted. I opened them for Joshua, and Jordan rolled back. I opened them for Gideon, and the enemy hosts fled. I will open them for you, if you will only let Me. On this side of the windows, heaven is the same rich storehouse as ever. The fountains and the streams are still bursting with gifts. The lack is not on My side. It is on yours. I am waiting. I am ready. Prove Me now.

God makes a supreme bid for our love and loyalty. Let each scrutinize prayerfully his accounting with the Most High, and ask himself: "Are the showers of blessing falling upon my family and upon my church? Are the windows above us open wide, or is my covetousness grieving the heavenly Giver and beating back the Holy Spirit?" To those living in the most fateful and momentous epoch of earth's history, God sends this counsel, this message. The gospel of the kingdom, now extending into all the world, calls for wholehearted service and liberality. Our individual growth in grace and participation in the final victory demands that we forfeit no heavenly gifts or privileges. Let us now accept the heavenly challenge and prove the worth of His promise: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him." Psalm 34:8.

11. A DARING PROPHECY PROVES TRUE

WE should all be concerned about the future," remarks a well-known writer, "because we have to spend all of our lives there." Man may produce marvelous inventions. He may predict the weather, and forecast astronomical events; but the wisest cannot tell what a day will bring forth or what will occur in the unborn years or centuries ahead.

Only the Infinite can definitely foretell the future. Of all the books that flood the world, the Bible alone presents an authentic, dependable program of coming events. Here is no careless, clumsy guesswork; for the prophecies are a vital, carefully prepared part of the great Book. All are invited to study, test, and verify the divine forecasts. Says the Infinite One: "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 word of God places fulfilled prophecy above all other external evidence of its inspiration. Even Christ based His claim to Messiahship upon the fulfillment of His word. "I tell you before it come," He declared, "that, when it is come to pass, you may believe that I am He." John 13:19. Again and again the prophets of old summoned unbelievers to face this crucial test. And today Holy Writ calls upon the peoples of earth to examine its predictions and be convinced of its accuracy.

"Have I not declared unto thee of old, and showed it? and you are My witnesses." "Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Isaiah 40, R.V.; 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21.

In this emphatic language the Bible challenges the entire world to watch the unfolding scroll of prophecy as it merges into history. It invites the wise man to duplicate the feat and write history in advance, but no one accepts the challenge. Yet, "with the sure, luminous strokes of infinite knowledge," the Bible speaks as unhesitatingly of the future as historians do of the past.

Old Egypt Speaks

As the curtain of secular history lifted in the Near East, the valley of the Nile already possessed a highly developed civilization. Consider its wealth of agriculture, its scholars who wrote prose and poetry,

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its scientists with a considerable knowledge of medicine and chemistry, and its unsurpassed artisans and architects whose monuments have stood throughout forty centuries. What mere man would have risked his reputation to foretell the complete eclipse of Egyptian culture and greatness?

Human imagination would never have pictured so tragic a downfall; yet Inspiration declared: "I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate." Ezekiel 29:10.

The Voice of Tyre

Three millenniums ago the Mediterranean was a vast Phoenician lake dotted with white-sailed galleys and fringed with colonies established by the parent city-state. The Phoenicians were antiquity's intrepid missionaries of civilization, and Tyre was the commercial metropolis of the world.

For centuries after century the inhabitants of "the merchant city" had despised Jehovah and practiced the degrading rites of Baal and Ashtaroah worship. The divine warnings had been disregarded, until at length the God of heaven addressed to them this final message:

"Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causes his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: 'I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea. . . . And they shall know that I am the Lord.'" Ezekiel 26:3-6.

The first act in this drama of the destruction of Tyre was accomplished by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who during a thirteen-year siege sent the flower of his army into the bitter struggle against the staunch defenders. Vengeance was wreaked upon the once princely city, and for a period of seventy years she remained as a forgotten heap of ruins. But the dauntless spirit of the Phoenicians at length revived, and on an island a half mile from shore they rebuilt their emporium, the new Tyre.

Conquered by Alexander

Two centuries later, as Alexander the Great marched to the conquest of the world, Tyre proudly defied him. The young emperor, who could not be baffled, constructed a great mole, or causeway, and over this approach his troops fought their way to new triumphs. He destroyed the city and ordered the buildings to be razed to their foundations. By this military stroke Alexander signally fulfilled two prophecies given centuries before: "I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock."

Twenty four centuries elapse, and an American traveler visiting the site of ancient Tyre finds but a squalid fishing village and a place for the spreading of nets. "Here," he writes, "was the little isle once covered by her palaces and surrounded by her fleets: but alas! Tyre has indeed become like 'the top of a rock.' The sole tokens of her more ancient splendor—columns of red and gray granite, sometimes forty or fifty heaped together, or marble pillars—lie broken and strewn in the midst of the sea; and the hovels that now nestle upon a portion of her site, present no contradiction of the dread decree, 'You shall be no more.'"

Here is a challenge. If a group of agnostics and infidels really desire to disprove the Bible, why do they not form a corporation and attempt to rebuild ancient Tyre?

The Dazzling Empire of Babylon

History, romance, and tradition have enshrined ancient Babylon with a picturesque and fascinating charm possessed by no other city of antiquity. Yet in the days of her might and magnificence, prophets of God foretold—

That she would become a tenantless and desolate metropolis, never to be inhabited. Jeremiah 50:13.

That amid the heaps of ruins and "pools of water" the superstitious Arabians would never "pitch tent there," nor the shepherds "make their fold." Isaiah 14:23; 13:20.

That its lordly palaces and temples would become dens for wild animals, caves for reptiles, and a habitation of owls and vultures. Verses 21, 22.

That Babylon would continue as "an astonishment" to the world. Jeremiah 50:13; 51:37, 41.

Time marches on; two and a half millenniums pass; and to this day travelers and archaeologists in the Euphrates Valley are awed and astonished as they behold the complete fulfillment of all these prophecies. Looking upon the ruins of Babylon, a noted explorer of dead cities observes:

"The traveler visits with no common emotion the scene of so many great and solemn events. Here Nebuchadnezzar boasted of his glories, and was punished for his pride. To those deserted halls were brought the captives of Judea. In them Daniel, undazzled by the glories around him, remained steadfast to his faith, rose to be a governor amongst his rulers, and prophesied the downfall of the kingdom. There was

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held Belshazzar's feast and was seen the writing on the wall. Between those crumbling mounds Cyrus entered the neglected gates. Those massive ruins cover the spot where Alexander died!" - Wonders of the Past, Page 135.

Archaeology, "the handmaiden of history," declares that Babylon was indeed a mighty city, even when judged by modern standards; that the hanging gardens existed in all the unmatched grandeur with which legend has invested them; that its palaces were magnificent; that Belshazzar was an altogether real and living monarch; and that amid the ruins there has been unearthed a royal hall or auditorium capable of entertaining a thousand guests at the imperial banquet.

Regarding the book of Daniel, eminent archaeologists assert that its narrative is so vivid, minute, and real that it must have been written at the time of Babylon's greatness—not two or three hundred years later. The charge that it was the product of an after generation is not new. More than seventeen hundred years ago the same accusation was made by the skeptic Porphyry, but every succeeding century has given added evidence to its unerring truthfulness; and in our day we approach the climax of fulfillment.

A Remarkable Classic and Its Author

When the author of this intensely interesting classic was a youth of some eighteen years, he was ruthlessly torn from his homeland in Judea to become an exile in Babylon. He was of noble birth and was resolute in his purpose, whatever the cost, to remain loyal to God. Nearly four years of his captivity had slipped swiftly by, when suddenly he faced a great crisis. The brain trust at the imperial court had dismally failed to reproduce the king's elusive dream, and, in his disappointed rage, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the death of the entire fraternity of wise men.

Daniel, a member of this select group, was in grave peril; but instead of going to his death as the king had decreed, we find him standing before the mightiest monarch of the age with this emphatic statement: "There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." Daniel 2:28.

With intrepid confidence the youth continued his presentation: "Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these. . . . You, O king, saw, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. You saw till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. . . . And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Verses 28-35.

Without hesitation or uncertainty the young spokesman declared this to be the forgotten dream and then proceeded with the interpretation: "You, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. . . . You art this head of gold." Verses 37, 38.

What an appropriate symbol for "the golden kingdom of a golden age." Inspiration had already described the Babylonian Empire as "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellence." Isaiah 13:19. And how pleasing it would have been if Daniel could have assured Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom would stand forever! But, irrespective of the possible effect upon the king, Daniel proceeded with the message from heaven:

"And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee." Daniel 2:39.

Some sixty-seven years after this prophecy was given, the Medo-Persians conquered queenly Babylon, slew Belshazzar, and possessed themselves of its treasures and territory. Under the leadership of such great emperors as Cyrus and Darius, Persia extended its authority from Ethiopia to India, a territory embracing 127 provinces. While greater in extent, Medo-Persia was "inferior" to Babylon in brilliancy and grandeur, even as silver is inferior to gold.

"And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." Verse 39.

These words of Daniel indicate a yet wider expanse of empire. In fulfillment, consider the meteoric rise of Greece, and the passing of world leadership from Asia to Europe. Alexander the Great, the mightiest conqueror of antiquity, overwhelmed the Persians in three great battles, the final and decisive engagement occurring at Arbela, 331 BC. Yet Alexander died at an early age; his kingdom soon crumbled; and when on the memorable field of Pydna 168 BC, the Roman legions vanquished the Greek phalanxes, Rome took its place as the undisputed master of the civilized world. This was in full harmony with the prophetic outline given through Daniel:

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things: and as iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." Verse 40.

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The Roman Empire Crashes to Its Doom

Yet even the mighty Caesars of the Seven-Hilted City were not destined to rule the world forever. We read the words of prophecy:

“And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken [“brittle,” margin].” Verses 41, 42.

History reveals the precise and accurate fulfillment. Between AD 351 and 476, Teutonic tribes from Northern Europe, swarming across the Rhine and the Danube, fell upon the dying Roman giant. Appropriating to themselves the rich provinces of his territory, they laid the foundations for the modern nations of Southern and Western Europe. The parallel prophecy recorded in the seventh chapter of Daniel states that Rome would be divided into ten parts. And in the words of one commentator writing on this subject: “Ten kingdoms, ten distinct and independent nations—no more, no less had fixed themselves within the boundaries of Western Rome; and the prophecy, spoken and written more than a thousand years before, was literally fulfilled.”

The tribal conquerors who established these nations were the Anglo-Saxons, the Alani, the Franks, the Burgundians, the Suevi, the Visigoths, the Lombards, the Huns, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths. The three last named were long ago utterly destroyed, while the other seven are among the modern nations of Europe.

Throughout the years many rulers and statesmen have attempted to unite these kingdoms that were “partly strong, and partly brittle” in to one great empire, or at least into a United States of Europe. Diplomats devised leagues, treaties, and the bonds of intermarriage. Charlemagne, Charles V, Napoleon, and Kaiser Wilhelm marshaled their legions, but all dismally failed in their ambitions; and Hitler’s ambitious plans likewise went down to defeat. Along the centuries the sure word of prophecy has declared: “The kingdom shall be divided. . . . They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” Verses 41-43. To the end of the present age no other universal kingdom is to be established. “The Scripture cannot be broken.”

World Empire of the Future

But what of the future? The prophet answers: “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” Verses 44, 45.

Looking backward upon the vivid panorama of accurately fulfilled prophecy, we see how gilded Babylon, ruthless Medo-Persia, intellectual Greece, and iron Rome each arose, accomplished its national destiny according to the divine blueprint, then crumbled to ruins. The next act in the great drama will be the establishment of Christ’s eternal kingdom.

The foregoing are but a few of the many amazing Bible prophecies that have been accurately fulfilled through the centuries. They inspire complete confidence in the Bible as an authentic twentieth-century Book. They provide the Christian with heaven-born optimism and absolute assurance concerning the future. God’s certified forecast of “a new heaven and a new earth,” of “a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed,” is soon to become a glorious reality; and those who place their trust in the sure promises of God are ere long to share in the delights of a country and a city that is infinitely more radiant and attractive than gilded Babylon by the Euphrates.

12. DIVINE PREVIEW OF HISTORY

“All the world’s a stage,” Shakespeare wrote. Let us, therefore, imagine ourselves seated in a large auditorium where a prophetic drama is to be enacted. The scenes were prepared under divine direction by Daniel, the great statesman and prophet of Babylon, as described in the seventh chapter of his book.