

HOPE FM

MYSTERIES UNEARTHED

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 marvellous 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 programme of coming events. Here is no careless, clumsy guesswork; for the prophecies are a vital, carefully prepared part of the great Book. You are invited to study, test, and verify the divine forecasts. The Infinite One says: “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 fulfilment of His word. “I am telling you now before it happens,” He declared, “so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am.” 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.

“Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses.” “Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” Isaiah 44:8 NIV; 1Thessalonians 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, 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 century 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: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets ... Then they will 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 13 year siege sent the flower of his army into the bitter struggle against the stanch defenders. Vengeance was wreaked upon the once princely city, and for a period of 70 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 traveller 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 splendour - columns of red and grey 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, 'Thou 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; 2½ millennia pass; and to this day travellers and archaeologists in the Euphrates Valley are awed and astonished as they behold the complete fulfilment of all these prophecies. Looking upon the ruins of Babylon, a noted explorer of dead cities observes: "The traveller 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 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 200 or 300 years later. The charge that it was the product of an after-generation is not new. More than 1,700 years ago the same accusation was made by the sceptic Porphyry, but every succeeding century has given added evidence to its unerring truthfulness; and in our day we approach the climax of fulfilment.

A Remarkable Classic and Its Author

When the author of this intensely interesting classic was a youth of some 18 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 4 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: "but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come." Daniel 2:28.

With intrepid confidence the youth continued his presentation: "Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these: "Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue - an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were all broken to pieces ... But the rock that struck the statue became a huge 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: "Your Majesty, you are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; ... You are that 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' excellency." 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: "After you, another kingdom will arise, inferior to yours." Daniel 2:39.

Some 67 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.

"Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth." Verse 39.

These words of Daniel indicate a yet wider expanse of empire. In fulfilment, 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 3 great battles, the final and decisive engagement occurring at Arbela, 331BC. Yet Alexander died at an early age; his kingdom soon crumbled; and when on the memorable field of Pydna, 168BC 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: "Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron - for iron breaks and smashes everything - and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others." Verse 40.

The Roman Empire Crashes to Its Doom

Yet even the mighty Caesars of the Seven-Hilled City were not destined to rule the world forever. We read the words of prophecy: "Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle." Verses 41, 42.

History reveals the precise and accurate fulfilment. Between 351 and 476AD, 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 7th chapter of Daniel states that Rome would be divided into 10 parts. And in the words of one commentator writing on this subject: "Ten kingdoms, 10 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 1,000 years before, was literally fulfilled.”

The tribal conquerors who established these nations were the Anglo-Saxons, the Alamanni, the Franks, the Burgundians, the Suevi, the Visigoths, the Lombards, the Heruli, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths. The 3 last named were long ago utterly destroyed while the other 7 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” into 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 marshalled 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: “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands - a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.” 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 twenty first-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 erelong to share in the delights of a country and a city that is infinitely more radiant and attractive than gilded Babylon by the Euphrates.

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