

Sufficiency of the Scriptures #6

Five Prophecies that changed the course of the World!

God writes history in advance. To get a frame of reference imagine with me that in 1700, somewhere in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, an unknown religious writer wrote about a future ruler. This Ruler was to

- would come to power in Europe
- would take control of a land called Germany [in 1700 it was called Prussia]
- would be named Adolph Hitler
- would conquer the continent
- and would be defeated by the Allied Forces

Now notice the year was 1700 and there was no

- Allied Forces, America was a Colony of Britain
- There was barely a Germany
- and Hitler was not to be born for 200 years!

Now, turn with me to Isaiah 41 to see why this description is so important. Look at another demonstration of the power of God as shown through His Word.

Isaiah 41:21 "Present your case," says the LORD. "Bring forth your strong [reasons,]" says the King of Jacob. (NKJV)

Now look at Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (NKJV)

God has staked His very character on the perfection and permanence of His Word! Look at His character revealed in v. 12-31. So God declared that:

1. Because Idols are foolish Isaiah 40:18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? (NKJV)
2. Because g is eternal and powerful Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (NKJV)
3. Let me show you My power Isaiah 41:21-23 "
4. Present your case," says the LORD. "Bring forth your strong [reasons,]" says the King of Jacob. 22 "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they [were,] That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. 23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you [are] gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That

we may be dismayed and see [it] together. (NKJV)

Declaring the future with precise details is a proof of God and His Divine Power! Now lets examine some of those precise details about the future He has written down for us.

I. The 3rd prophecy of Five that changed the course of the world is about a future conqueror named by God two hundred years before His Birth! Sitting at a desk in a small and obscure home in ancient walled Jerusalem a young prophet of the God of Israel named Isaiah did just that. Open with me please to Isaiah 45:1-3
"Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held -- To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: 2 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call [you] by your name, [Am] the God of Israel. (NKJV)

These words were inspired by God to Isaiah in about the year 740 BC. What are the specifics? Why don't you note them with me:

A ruler is coming that will subdue nations and open doors for God.

He is called by name - Cyrus (He was born in about 589 BC and reigned from 559 to 530 BC) nearly 200 years after these words were written.

The Lord says he was an anointed servant doing the plan of God.

Note that God has some very specific plans for him to carry out Isaiah 44:28 Who says of Cyrus, '[He is] My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." ' (NKJV)

Wait a minute. Isaiah is looking at the Temple on Moriah even as he writes these words. It is Solomons and it is there in all its glory. The Babylonians don't destroy it for 154 more years in 586 BC.

The Lord says:

- The city of Jerusalem will be taken,
- Temple will be destroyed,
- A pagan ruler will command its reconstruction,
- And all this at the hand of a God who declares it almost 200 years ahead of time!

So when Isaiah speaks of a future conqueror ordained of God he is demonstrating one of the claims of the Lord to His right to be worshiped as God He WRITES THE FUTURE!

Isaiah 41:23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you [are] gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see [it] together. (NKJV)

1. BABYLON WILL BE CONQUERED Now look at Isaiah 43:14-21 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "For your sake I will send to Babylon, And bring them all down as fugitives -- The

Chaldeans, who rejoice in their ships. 15 I [am] the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King." 16 Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea And a path through the mighty waters, 17 Who brings forth the chariot and horse, The army and the power (They shall lie down together, they shall not rise; They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick): 18 "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness [And] rivers in the desert. 20 The beast of the field will honor Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I give waters in the wilderness [And] rivers in the desert, To give drink to My people, My chosen. 21 This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise. (NKJV)

2. IDOLS ARE FOOLISH AND IMPOTENT Isaiah 44:9-20
3. GOD ALONE IS MAGNIFICENT AND GLORIOUS AS CREATOR, REDEEMER AND SUSTAINER: Isaiah 44:24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: "I [am] the LORD, who makes all [things,] Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; (NKJV)
4. GOD CONFIRMD HIS WORD ABOUT EVENTS NOT YET EVEN HAPPENED Isaiah 44:26 Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' And I will raise up her waste places; (NKJV) Jerusalem was not even destroyed when God promised her rebuilding!
5. GOD NAMES THE TOOL THAT WILL DO ALL THIS (conquer Babylon and rebuild Jerusalem) Isaiah 44:28 Who says of Cyrus, '[He is] My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." ' (NKJV) HIS NAME IS CYRUS!

There are two parts to this story. First the fall of Babylon and second the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its Temple.

B. THE FALL

So, 200 years pass and Babylon sits proud, powerful and impregnable. The walls of the city are 30 stories (300 feet) high. They are 90 feet thick at the bottom and have a chariot road at the top that allowed 2 chariots to pass each other as they traveled around. But as g already said in chapter 13, babylon will fall. And here is the name of the one who will do it - CYRUS.

So, Cyrus is born, he leads the Persians, and on October 29th, 539 BC he

enters Babylon, kills Belteshazzar (Daniel 5) and takes the city!

C. THE REBUILDING

Look with me at Ezra 1:1-4 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also [put it] in writing, saying, 2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which [is] in Judah. 3 Who [is] among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which [is] in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He [is] God), which [is] in Jerusalem. 4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which [is] in Jerusalem. (NKJV)

Cyrus acknowledges God and decrees the rebuilding project.

Wow. God said it in the writings of a prophet who wrote from 740 - 700 BC. Babylon would take Israel. Cyrus would take Babylon. Jerusalem and its Temple would be rebuilt at Cyrus' expense.

Well, 200 years pass and it all happens, just like God said. And that is why he is God, only God could do that.

II. The 4th Prophecy THE DESTRUCTION OF TYRE: Of the hundreds of specific and detailed prophecies in the Bible we could examine, we shall concentrate here on one of the most famous: the body of prophecy concerning the destruction of Tyre. That magnificent Phoenician city on the coast of Palestine was leveled to the dust by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. in one of history's most spectacular battles. To accomplish that goal, Alexander employed military tactics, engineering genius, and innovative methods.

A. The story of Tyre's doom originated several centuries earlier when the prophet Ezekiel (who wrote for God from 593 to 571 BC) pronounced the city's destruction because of its traffic in slaves and its vile, cruel religion. In foretelling Tyre's overthrow, the prophet added detail after detail (Ezekiel 26).

1. He said that the invader would first take the suburbs of the city (the "daughter" cities of Tyre) and then he would take Tyre itself (26:6-11);
2. that many nations would come against the city (26:3);
3. that Tyre itself would be thrown into the sea (26:12);
4. that the actual site of the city would be left flat and scraped as clean as a rock; that where Tyre once had stood fishermen would spread their nets;
5. and finally, for good measure, the city known to Ezekiel would never

again be rebuilt (26:14).

In Ezekiel's day such predictions as those must have sounded ridiculous. Tyre was mistress of the seas, the seaport of the world. Even mighty Carthage, whose troops under Hannibal almost conquered Rome, was a mere colony of Tyre. Tyre enjoyed its great prosperity between 1100 and 573 B.C. Its location enabled it to resist capture for centuries. Its walls defied even the siege-wise troops of Assyria.

Tyre was the proudest and most prosperous city on earth when Ezekiel wrote—the emporium of the world, its markets bulging with gold and precious stones from Ethiopia and Arabia, silver from Spain, tin from Britain, emeralds from Damascus, ivory from the East, and wheat, honey, and oil from Palestine.

By the time Nebuchadnezzar's troops came hammering at its gates, Tyre was riding the crest of imperial might and power, secure in the belief that, having defied the Assyrians for five years, its defenders could certainly sneer down from its walls and fortresses at the Babylonians. But Tyre's hour had come, although none of its citizenry knew it.

- First, Nebuchadnezzar's armies took the daughter cities of Tyre on the mainland as foretold; then, in 585 B.C., he brought the full weight of arms to bear on the main prize itself. For months he battered away at the city's defenses until at last he broke through, sacked the town, burned the city to the ground, and left it a heap of rubble littering the landscape. The people of Tyre, however, escaped to an island lying half a mile offshore, and from there they continued to defy the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar had neither the fleet nor the resources for an amphibious assault on the new Tyre. He continued his siege for another thirteen years and then gave up. Both sides acknowledged that the situation was a stalemate, and they signed a truce in 572 B.C.
- Tyre had won a moral victory over Nebuchadnezzar, but part of Ezekiel's prophecy had been fulfilled. The Tyre known by the prophet was no more, and its ruins testified to the partial fulfillment of prophecy. But it seemed it must remain just a partial fulfillment, for Nebuchadnezzar had more important matters on his mind than tossing the rubble of Tyre into the sea merely fulfill the oracles of a Hebrew prophet whose name he likely did not even know. Meanwhile, the people of the new island Tyre set about fortifying their city against further would-be - ors. They built mighty walls 150 feet high all around the coastline of their city. They mined the channel to the mainland with underwater obstacles to sink unwary enemy ships, and they built a first-class navy. For two and a half centuries e in security while Ezekiel's prophecies slumbered in the womb of time.
- Then, in 332 B.C., Alexander the Great came hammering at their walls, and Alexander was a far more brilliant tactician than Nebuchadnezzar.
- The Macedonians had just won a tremendous victory over the Persian army in 333 B.C. Flushed with victory, they were marching south to take Egypt. Alexander had no intention of leaving a powerful city-

state like Tyre standing astride his lines of communication, and since his navy was no match for Tyre's, he decided to build a causeway from the mainland to the island. To get the materials he needed for that mammoth project he used the rubble of old Tyre, left behind centuries before by Nebuchadnezzar. Before the causeway was finished, his engineers and sappers had scraped up the very dust of the old ruins and thrown it into the sea.

- The people of the island fought back desperately to halt the building of that causeway of doom, but God's clock had struck the hour. Nothing now could prevent Tyre's full and final fall. Alexander's men made giant shields for shelter from the arrows and missiles of the foe as the mole they were building crept relentlessly on. Then his engineers built mobile towers, twenty stories high, with an upper platform that towered 160 feet above the ground. These towers were dragged along the causeway and from them Alexander's troops could look right down into stricken Tyre. Drawbridges on the front of the towers enabled the Macedonians to leap at last over the massive walls and take the city. So Tyre fell and Alexander had unwittingly fulfilled Ezekiel's ancient prophecy. As the centuries came and went, drifting sand from the sea converted Alexander's causeway into a peninsula on which fishermen now spread their nets.

B. Peter Stoner, a mathematician, once applied the law of compound probabilities to seven Biblical prophecies concerning Tyre. He assigned conservative estimates of probability to each of the seven statements to see if Ezekiel's prophecy could have been fulfilled by chance. He concluded that Ezekiel's chances of writing this prophecy and having it come true by luck amounted to one chance in seventy-five thousand. Yet everything came true to the minutest detail.

If this were the only such prophecy in the Bible one could concede that a fortuitous series of coincidences might have brought about the fulfillment. But there are scores of other such prophecies in the Old Testament dealing with the fate of cities and nations.

- Following the same ground rules, Dr. Stoner applied the law of probabilities to Biblical prophecies concerning (1) Samaria, (2) Gaza and Ashkelon, (3) Jericho, (4) the golden gate in Jerusalem, (5) the plowing of Zion, (6) the enlargement of Jerusalem, (7) Palestine, (8) Moab and Ammon, (9) Edom, and (10) Babylon.
- He worked out the probabilities for the various prophecies connected with those places and came to the astonishing conclusion that the chances of the accumulated predictions all coming true were one in 5.76×10^{59} that is, one chance in 5.76 multiplied by 10 and followed by 59 zeros.
- Such a figure is beyond our power to comprehend when thus stated; it is astronomical. Dr. Stoner, therefore, illustrated what such a figure means. He suggested we make 5.76×10 to the 59th power silver dollars. That many silver dollars, he said, would be sufficient for us to make 10 to the 28th power solid silver balls each the size of our sun. Or, to put it another way, from our pile of silver dollars we could make the equivalent of all the

stars in all the galaxies of space two million times over. Now let us suppose that one of those 5.76 X 10 to the 59th silver dollars was marked. The chance that these accumulated prophecies could all come true would be the same chance of a blind man finding that marked silver dollar the first time he tried.

- C. The Bible contains far more than the eleven groupings of prophecy treated by Dr. Stoner. In each of them the words ring out from Isaiah 42:21-23 The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will exalt the law and make [it] honorable. 22 But this [is] a people robbed and plundered; All of them are snared in holes, And they are hidden in prison houses; They are for prey, and no one delivers; For plunder, and no one says, "Restore!" 23 Who among you will give ear to this? [who] will listen and hear for the time to come? (NKJV)

III. Finally, the 5th prophecy is the Judgemnt upon Jerusalem. This prophesy was made by none other than Jesus Himself who predicted the horrible future awaiting the city after His crucifixion. As he wept over the city He said Luke 19:43-44 "For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, 44 "and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (NKJV). Again He said Luke 21:24 "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (NKJV)

- A. Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha and the Empty Grave were about the year AD 30. Forty years (the number of testing) pass.
- B. In AD 70 it happened. An eyewitness by the name of Josephus gives the grisly details as a news reporter at the scene of this carnage where 600,000 Jews were slain and many more thousands were taken away into captivity.
- C. Again they rebel in AD 134 and this time Hadrian ruthlessly smashes them, destroys the city, levels, plows up the foundations and rebuilds a pagan city Aeia Capitolina. All Jews are banished and scattered.
- D. Yes, again the Bible is true and without error. It is God alone who knows and can reveal the future.

Back to Isaiah 41:17-20 "The poor and needy seek water, but [there is] none, Their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; [I,] the God of Israel, will not forsake them. 18 I will open rivers in desolate heights, And fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, And the dry land springs of water. 19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, The myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree [and] the pine And the box tree together, 20 That they may see and know, And consider and understand together, That the hand of the LORD has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it. (NKJV)

Look at Him through Isaiah's eyes. Do you see thye One who can be known?

John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (NKJV)

If so then you can find Him to be the ALL SUFFICIENT GOD WHO IS ENOUGH. Listen to Isaiah 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these [things,] Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of [His] power; Not one is missing. (NKJV)

You can trust His ALL SUFFICIENT WORD THAT IS ENOUGH Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (NKJV)

And then wherever you are in the world,
at whatever stage you are in life,
at whatever level you are of need spiritually, emotionally or physically -

He is able to Isaiah 41:17 "The poor and needy seek water, but [there is] none, Their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; [I,] the God of Israel, will not forsake them. (NKJV) REFRESH, RESTORE, STRENGTHEN and make us ABOUND!

The God who write the future has written a very present help, it is the Scriptures, The Book you can Trust.