

Prophecy Proves the Bible True

by Richard Morgan

The Bible is a book about prophecy. Or rather, the Bible *is* prophecy. Usually when we talk about prophecy we think of foretelling the future, and that is what this pamphlet is about – how the Bible tells us about the future. Not in a general way, like we might see in a horoscope. No, the Bible gives us specific details about the future. The accuracy of these details shows that the Bible is like no other book. But the word prophecy also means "forth telling" as well as foretelling, which means that prophecy is about God telling us the way of life we ought to lead. The way in which God foretells the future gives us reason to listen to God when he tells us how we ought to live our lives. Bible prophecy proves that God is right.

Something we need to understand about Bible prophecy is that it isn't like God looking into a crystal ball, reading palms, or any of the things that human fortune tellers do, seeing the future, and then writing down what will happen. That would mean God isn't in control of His creation; but He is. In fact Bible prophecy is all about God having a definite plan at the beginning of time and then guiding the writers of the Bible to tell us about that plan and events that will take place throughout time that will eventually bring that purpose to pass. That's Bible prophecy: God through His word telling us about future events that will happen in the future because He has decided that they will happen.

To illustrate how fundamental prophecy is to the Bible message consider the first thing that God said, because in a way it is a prophecy:

"And God said, "Let there be light", and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)

Think about that for a moment. Here is the power of God's word in action. God says something and then amazing things happen. God simply had to say something like "let there be stars" and the universe was filled with them. This helps us see the power of Bible prophecy and is it is commented on by the Psalmist:

"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host... For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm." (Psalm 33:6,9)

What power there is in the word of God! We can have the utmost confidence in Bible prophecy because what God says will happen will surely come to pass - "he spoke, and it came to be". No human being has the ability to do this: we are either not true to our word or our predictions fail. But God is different. The Bible says that whatever He says will surely come to pass, just as surely as the sun rises in the east at the dawn of every new day:

"Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar – the LORD of hosts is his name: If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever" (Jeremiah 31:35-36)

Notice what Jeremiah says here. He reminds us of all those things we take for granted: the sun, moon and stars. We don't go to bed at night wondering if the sun will rise the next day - it certainly is a "fixed order". Then the prophet compares this with the purpose of God, which is tied up with the fate of "the offspring of Israel" and their existence as a nation.

We will come to Israel later on and see how prophecies concerning that nation are an amazing witness to God and His purpose just as the sun, moon and stars testify to His creation.

But first let us look at an example of a prophecy from Ezekiel 26. This chapter records God's decision to judge the ancient city of Tyre for their opposition to the people of Israel. The prophecy says:

1. That Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, would conquer Tyre (verses 7-11).
2. That the city would be made desolate (verse 2).
3. That it would be thrown into the sea (verse 12).
4. That it would become a place to spread nets upon (verse 14).
5. That its maritime supremacy would cease forever (verse 17).

This is an excellent example of a prophecy that has had a complete and wonderful fulfillment. When we realize how completely and accurately it has been fulfilled it is like a hook to hang our faith on, so that when God speaks about future things that are still yet to come to pass we can trust that God will always be true to His word.

Ezekiel gave the prophecy in about BC 596 when Tyre was a major trading centre. It was situated on the Mediterranean coast in modern day Lebanon and for centuries the ships of Tyre ruled the waves. But having angered Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians, they suffered a siege that eventually caused the city walls of Tyre to fall. The people of Tyre, seeing their city about to fall, took all their possessions and fled to an island a half mile from shore. From her new water-enclosed fortress the new city of Tyre continued to defy her enemies.

Although Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled a good part of the prophecy there were certain details that were not yet fulfilled. Someone living in those times might even have said "the prophecy wasn't fulfilled exactly, God's word is not infallible!" For instance, Ezekiel said:

"They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters... I will make you a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets. You shall never be rebuilt ... when I bring up the deep over you, and the great waters cover you." (Ezekiel 26:12, 14, 19)

Nebuchadnezzar accomplished none of this, though he destroyed the original city. The prophecy spoke of an unnamed power as "they shall do it." For almost 250 years Tyre continued as a city and rose to new power. It must have seemed as though Ezekiel's prophecy had failed. But as last Tyre opposed Alexander of Greece. Alexander was determined that he would bring Tyre under his control. To do so he had to get at the island fortress, and that meant that he had to build a ramp connecting the mainland with the island across which his soldiers could march.

The stones, the walls, the pleasant houses of the ruins of the mainland city (the one Ezekiel said would be utterly destroyed and never rebuilt) provided him with a means to do this. He ordered that they be thrown "into the sea" (as Ezekiel had predicted) for this purpose. A clean sweep was made of the site, and not a remnant of the city remained. Nor was it ever rebuilt. God had decreed that this would be its fate, and His words were fulfilled to the very letter, though for 250 years every indication seemed to point to the contrary.

Today, the blue waters of the Mediterranean wash over the ruins of Tyre, which has literally become "a place to spread nets upon." Go to the site of ancient Tyre today, and it is possible to see Arab fishermen doing that which Ezekiel predicted they would do 2,500 years ago. The mighty city of ancient Tyre was completely erased. The amazing thing is the detail in which the Bible predicted all this, and the wonderful way in which each point was finally fulfilled. Fallible man cannot predict the future with such certainty and detail, but the Bible does. It shows that this wonderful book can be thoroughly relied upon, and confirms that those prophecies which speak of the second coming of Christ, and the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth will come to pass, even though the fulfillment might appear improbable to mortal man.

The prophecy of Tyre is an impressive one but the greatest witness to the power of Bible prophecy is seen in the Jews and nation of Israel. The nation of Israel is central to God's purpose. That purpose is to establish His Kingdom on Earth, centered in Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ will reign forever with those who have believed on his name. The promises that God made to Abraham and David focus our minds on this purpose. Abraham was a man who lived about 2,000 years before Christ and came from Ur of the Chaldees in modern day Iraq. He was called specially by God for His purpose and became the father of the Jewish race. David was one of the greatest kings of Israel who reigned in Jerusalem towards the beginning of the kingdom for forty years.

Abraham was promised the land of Israel as a possession forever along with his descendant (Genesis 13:14-15) and David was told that his descendent would sit on his throne in Jerusalem forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13). The New Testament then opens with the words "...Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). The Bible is full of references to the time when Jesus Christ has returned to Earth (often called "The Second Coming") and established the Kingdom. This is God's purpose and as a witness to this purpose He selected His chosen people: the Jews. Isaiah the prophet records the following words about God's chosen people the Jews:

"All the nations gather together, and the people assemble. Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right, and let them hear and say, It is true. "You are my witnesses", declares the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and beside me there is no savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses, declares the LORD" (Isaiah 43:9-12)

We will see that the existence of Israel as a nation today is an amazing witness to the existence of God and that we can trust that what He says in His word, the Bible, will surely happen in the future.

The story of Israel in Bible prophecy begins with their dispersion among the nations. Having rejected their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, God caused the Roman armies to come against Jerusalem in AD 70. The Romans destroyed the Jewish temple and later razed the city to the ground. The effect of this utter devastation was to scatter the Jews into every corner of the globe. Today we still have Jews living in almost every country in the world. This is exactly as God had said would happen. In Deuteronomy 28 we have reference to a siege against the Jewish people:

"The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand... They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you. And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you." (verses 49, 52-53)

History books confirm the terror of the siege against Jerusalem in which the Jews were reduced to such depths of hunger and anguish that some even ate their own sons and daughters to keep alive. The chapter goes on to say:

"And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say, 'If only it were evening!' and at evening you shall say, 'If only it were morning!' because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see." (verses 64-66)

These words have come to pass to the letter throughout the centuries since AD 70. For almost 2,000 years the Jews have been scattered all over the world and also persecuted. The words "your life shall hang in doubt before you" has been fulfilled again and again in European history, culminating in the horrors of the Nazi Death Camps during the Second World War. But the Jews have suffered elsewhere too and anti-Semitism has been seen in many countries around the world.

Here are some more words about the time when the Jews have been in dispersion, this time concerning the land of Israel itself:

"And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. Then shall the land enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest ..." (Leviticus 26:32-35)

Notice the words here "and I myself will devastate it". For the point of view of human history it was the Roman armies and those who came after who devastated the land. But it happened in accordance with God's will and purpose so God says He did it - He is in control and His word surely comes to pass.

The land, commonly known as Palestine after the scattering of the Jews, was ruled over by a succession of foreign powers. The Ottoman Turks, who ruled this area from the year 1516 to 1917, regarded it as part of Southern Syria. For centuries, as the prophecy said, the land was desolate, under populated and economically stagnant. This is what one famous traveler said of the land when he visited it:

"... a desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds - a silent mournful expanse... A desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action... We never saw a human being on the whole route... There was hardly a tree or a shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country."

(Mark Twain, 'The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrim's Progress' (1869))

But that wasn't the end of the Jewish people. Despite being scattered all over the world and suffering persecution for centuries the Bible predicted their return to the land of Israel. We might refer to this as the resurrection of Israel because it brought back the nation from the dead. In fact Bible prophecy refers to it in just this way in Ezekiel 37 where the prophet sees a valley of dry bones which come together to form a body that begins to live again. We are told that these bones represent "the whole house of Israel" (verse 11) that would be resurrected:

"Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I will open your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel" (verse 12)

This was an amazing statement by Ezekiel, speaking of the national resurrection of the people of Israel. For almost two thousand years the likelihood of this happening was almost non-existent. It would be like saying that the ancient Babylonians are to be restored to their land and empire. But how many Babylonians do you know today? But that is part of the miracle of Israel: their very existence as an identifiable people despite centuries of dispersion and persecution in which men have tried to wipe them off the face of the earth.

Here are some more verses that predicted the return of the Jews to their land:

"Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'" (Ezekiel 11:17)

"Then fear not, O Jacob my servant, declares the LORD, nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from far away, and your offspring from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with you to save you, declares the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end." (Jeremiah 30:10-11)

These are amazing words. To those who read those words throughout the centuries when the Jews were dispersed to every corner of the globe it was impossible. No Jews lived in the land of then called Palestine. It was a deserted wilderness ruled over by the Ottoman Turks. The Jews were scattered all over the world and persecuted. There was never any chance that they would return to the land. But it happened. In 1948, after almost two thousand years - think about that, two thousand years - in dispersion and suffering so much the nation of Israel was

once more a reality in the earth. You see, with God the humanly impossible comes to pass because He said it will and His prophetic word is infallible.

God's hand can be seen in the way in which the Jews came back to their homeland, or rather back to the land that God in His word had promised to them as a possession. Their return began to gather pace with the advent of Zionism at the end of the nineteenth century but also remarkably in the two great world wars of the twentieth. In 1917, after the British army freed Jerusalem from Turkish control, the British government issued a declaration concerning the Jews:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."
(The Balfour Declaration, November 2, 1917)

Also at this time the area of Palestine was made a League of Nations Mandate and put under British control. But in 1922 the British government divided the land of the Mandate into two administrative districts and gave the area to the east of the river Jordan (what became known as Transjordan) to a Hashemite ruler named Abdullah. This is now the area known as the nation of Jordan.

The Second World War also helped with the reestablishment of the nation of Israel. Following the dreadful events of the Holocaust the United Nations deemed it necessary to speed up the process and in 1947 they voted to further divided Palestine by a 2/3 majority into a Jewish and Arab state. Although 75% of the land allotted to the Jews was desert they were desperate to return to their homeland after suffering so much in Europe and accepted the offer. But the Arab states of Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen voted against the resolution. This was the beginning of the conflict between the Arabs and Jews that still continues this day. And this conflict is further testimony to the miracle of the modern day nation of Israel.

In May of 1948 the new state of Israel was finally declared but this was only the catalyst for an Arab invasion. They attacked Israel from all sides. On the day that Israel declared its independence, the Arab League Secretary, General Azzam Pasha declared "jihad", a holy war. He said, "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades". The Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al Husseini stated, "I declare a holy war, my Moslem brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all!" The armies of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq invaded the tiny new country with the declared intent of destroying it.

During the war For Israel's independence, many Jewish villages were destroyed, synagogues and cemeteries desecrated, and fields and buildings burned. The Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem was besieged, and kept without food or water, and eventually the Jordanians expelled the Jews from the Old City. The Jordanians took over East Jerusalem and a large portion of land on the west bank of the Jordan River, thereby narrowing Israel to approximately nine miles at its narrowest point. Egyptian troops overran the Gaza strip in the west as well as the southern outskirts of Jerusalem. But despite tremendous losses, the new Jewish State survived.

In 1949 the new state of Israel signed armistice agreements with several Arab states, including Jordan which annexed the area of Judea and Samaria, now known as the West Bank. From there they were to launch many attacks against the very vulnerable Jewish people. Also, having lost in battle what they could have had in the peace envisioned by the 1947 Partition Plan, Palestinian Arab terrorist groups, called "Fedayeen", began systematic raids against the Israeli civilian population. 1,300 Israelis were killed and wounded by Arab terrorists between 1949 and 1956. The "Fedayeen" operated from bases located in and controlled by Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.

During the early months of 1966, it became clear that Israel's neighbors were escalating activities against her. More and more Israeli civilians were killed in the Syrian and Jordanian borders. The Syrians, from atop the Golan Heights, shelled Israeli towns indiscriminately. On May 15, 1967, Egyptian forces moved into the Sinai. On May 18, Egypt expelled the UN Peacekeeping forces from Israel's borders. On the 22nd, the Egyptians closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. On the 25th, encouraged by Egypt - Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia moved their troops to Israel's borders.

Two days later, on the 26th of May, President Nasser of Egypt declared, "Our basic goal is the destruction of Israel. The Arab people want to fight... The mining of Sharm El Sheik is a confrontation with Israel". Pacts were signed by Egypt with Jordan and Iraq on May 30th and June 4th, thereby completing the encirclement of Israel.

On June 5th, Israel decided to launch a pre-emptive attack on Egypt. Israel issued an appeal to Jordan to stay out of the war. Jordan refused and opened a heavy artillery barrage on both west Jerusalem and the Tel-Aviv area that forced Israel to counterattack. By June 8th the Israel Defence Forces defeated the Jordanian forces and captured the whole of the West Bank. On the morning of June 9th, Israel attacked the Syrians on the Golan Heights. From these heights, Syria had shelled and destroyed 205 houses, 175 acres of orchards and 75 acres of grain.

In just six days, despite having been attacked from all sides and facing overwhelming odds against them, Israel had captured the entire Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. Terrorist raids from Egypt ended and other raids, from Jordan and Syria, greatly diminished.

But this was not to be the end of Arab attempts to destroy the nation of Israel. On October 6, 1973 - Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar - Egypt and Syria opened a coordinated surprise attack against Israel. The equivalent of the total forces of NATO in Europe of recent times were mobilized on Israel's borders. On the Golan Heights approximately 180 Israeli tanks faced an onslaught of 1,400 Syrian tanks. Along the Suez Canal, fewer than 500 Israeli defenders were attacked by 80,000 Egyptians.

At least nine Arab states, including four non-Middle Eastern nations, actively aided the Egyptian-Syrian war effort. A few months before the Yom Kippur War Iraq transferred a squadron of Hunter jets to Egypt. During the war, an Iraqi division of some 18,000 men and several hundred tanks was deployed in the central Golan and participated in the October 16 attack against Israeli positions. Iraqi MiGs began operating over the Golan Heights as early as October 8, the third day of the war.

Besides serving as financial underwriters, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait committed men to battle. A Saudi brigade of approximately 3,000 troops was dispatched to Syria, where it participated in fighting along the approaches to Damascus. Also, violating Paris's ban on the transfer of French-made weapons, Libya sent Mirage fighters to Egypt (from 1971-1973, President Muammar Qaddafi gave Cairo more than \$1 billion in aid to rearm Egypt and to pay the Soviets for weapons delivered).

Other North African countries responded to Arab and Soviet calls to aid the front-line states. Algeria sent three aircraft squadrons of fighters and bombers, an armored brigade and 150 tanks. Approximately 1,000-2,000 Tunisian soldiers were positioned in the Nile Delta. Sudan stationed 3,500 troops in southern Egypt, and Morocco sent three brigades to the front lines, including 2,500 men to Syria.

Syrian air defense forces used Lebanese radar units. Lebanon also allowed Palestinian terrorists to shell Israeli civilian settlements from its territory. Palestinians fought on the Southern Front with the Egyptians and Kuwaitis.

Thrown onto the defensive during the first two days of fighting, Israel mobilized its reserves and eventually repulsed the invaders and carried the war deep into Syria and Egypt. The Arab states were swiftly re-supplied by sea and air from the Soviet Union, which rejected U.S. efforts to work toward an immediate cease-fire. As a result, the United States belatedly began its own airlift to Israel. Two weeks later, Egypt was saved from a disastrous defeat by the UN Security Council, which had failed to act while the tide was in the Arabs' favor.

Israel once more, against huge odds, defeated the Arabs armies and the nation exists to this day. God's hand can be seen in all these events. In fact during the war of 1973 it just so happened that the President of the United States, Richard Nixon, was up to his neck in the Watergate scandal and had handed over all foreign affairs decisions to Henry Kissinger who just happens to be Jewish. Through his efforts the United States were able to make the biggest arms airlift in history to aid the Jews against their Arab invaders.

Israel became a nation and still is a nation not due to human endeavours but because God deemed it to be so in His Word. What a witness to the existence and integrity of the God of the Bible we see in the miracle of Israel!

The message of the Bible depends on God being true to His word. In fact if Bible prophecy doesn't come to pass then we can throw away our Bibles and stop believing in God. God puts faith in His very existence on the line by making predictions of future events. God is bold enough to say:

"I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'... I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it." (Isaiah 46:9-11)

By looking at Bible prophecy we can establish whether or not God exists. If He exists then the predictions he has made will come to pass. But more than that: if we understand from Bible prophecy that God is true to His word then we can have faith that the predictions He

has made that have not yet come to pass will come to pass. Ultimately that means that what God has promised to those who will listen to Him are sure and certain. God has a plan: He has said that He will send Jesus Christ to the earth again to set up a Kingdom that will last for ever. You have seen the evidence that God is true to His Word. He scattered Israel but has brought them back to their land as He promised. Are you willing to put your trust in the God of Israel, the God of the Bible?

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[All Bible quotations are taken from the English Standard Version]

Published and printed by:
Printland Publishers
G.P.O. Box 159,
Hyderabad 500 001, India