

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION Chapter 11

THE HOLY BIBLE ITS FULFILLED PROPHECIES

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Transcript

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Chapter 11

THE HOLY BIBLE

ITS FULFILLED PROPHECIES

If the Bible is a human invention it ought not to require very much perspicuity to discover and demonstrate its imposture. The Scriptures claim to be of Divine inspiration, but if that claim is an empty and unfounded one, then it should be no hard matter to prove it is so. The Bible not only treats considerably of history and moral instruction, but it contains not a little prophecy, and that not in dark and dubious language, like that of the pretended Sibylline Oracle, such as that ambiguous answer made to the inquiry of Croesus when he was about to engage the Persians in war: "Croesus, having passed the river Hily, shall overturn a great empire"—which would be verified whether his own kingdom or that of the Persians was subverted. Radically different are the predictions of Holy Writ. They are clear and definite, enter into specific and minute details, and in many instances are too plain to be misunderstood. Thus, the dispute between the Christian and the Infidel may be reduced to a short and simple issue: if Scripture prophecy be Divinely inspired then it will be accomplished; if it be spurious, it will not be. Since the words "prophecy" and "prediction" are frequently used in a loose and general sense in present-day parlance, it is requisite that we should carefully define our term. By a "prophecy" we mean the annunciation of some future event which could not have been foreknown by natural means or arrived at by logical deduction from present data. Such are scores of predictions recorded in the Bible hundreds of years ago, and which have been accurately verified by history. They are entirely different from weather forecasts, which are more often wrong than right, and merely announce climatic conditions a few days ahead. To bear any resemblance to the prophecies of Scripture, they would have to prognosticate the specific temperature, the direction of the wind, the precise rainfall upon a certain city or country on a given day, 500 years hence! The reader will readily perceive that all of the scientists and astronomers in the world possess no such prevision as that. Yet the Bible abounds with forecasts far more wonderful. It requires no prophetic spirit to declare that, life permitting, a certain male infant will develop into a child, and then into a man; but it would to announce

from his cradle whether he will be a fool or a wise man, a failure or success; and still more so to predict the exact span of his life, and where and how he will die. A well-informed politician may foretell how soon there will be a general election, and which party will win the same; but he is quite incapable of foreseeing the political, social, economic and religious condition of his country 100 years from now. And, likewise, it would be completely beyond his powers to give the name and describe the character of its ruler in that day. An experienced statesman may indeed discern the speedy breakup of his state, and from the temper of its subjects deduce that it is likely to collapse under a fearful revolution, but he could not predict and describe the successive changes of empires centuries in advance—changes which depend upon countless unknown incidents. Yet the Bible does that very thing! Sagacious conjecture is very different from Scripture prediction. Prophecy is, as one has well defined it, "the eyes of the omniscient God reading the predestinated future, and revealing the secret to His servants, the Prophets." It is demonstrated to be such by the actual accomplishment of the same as testified to by the records of history. And it is highly significant that sacred history ends where profane history—that part of it, at least, which is commonly regarded as reliable—begins, so that the great changes in world affairs which the Divine seers foretold are confirmed by secular recorders of events, thereby effectually closing the mouths of skeptics. Thus the remarkable predictions of Daniel concerning the rise, the career, and the character of the great Gentile powers which occupied the stage during the last six centuries before the advent of Christ may be fully checked from the chronicles of heathen historians, who, entirely unacquainted with the Old Testament (which then existed only in the Hebrew language), were quite unaware that they were narrating the fulfillment of the same. The book of Daniel contains prophetic visions which describe one momentous event after another that has come before the observance of the whole world: events so unlikely, so startling, and so far-reaching, that no wisdom could possibly have foreseen the same—least of all, so far in advance. It was therein revealed that four successive world kingdoms should arise, to be followed by a spiritual and everlasting kingdom set up by God Himself. Those four empires are viewed under the figure of wild beasts, to denote their strength, ferocity, and agility. It was therein foretold that they should come forth from "the great sea" (Dan. 7:2, 3), which in Scripture always has reference to the Mediterranean, thereby defining the center of their territorial origin. By that limitation of four, God made it known that after the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires there should never again be another kingdom commensurate with those. Charlemagne, Napoleon, the Kaiser, Hitler, in their insatiable greed, coveted and strove to form one, but in vain. Equally so will prove the ambitions of Moscow. [Written in 1948]. It is an incontrovertible fact that no Infidel has ever dared to meet the great body of Scripture prophecy, nor seriously attempted a reply to the many books written thereon, calling attention to their accomplishment. Either they are silently ignored, or dismissed with some such scurrilous remark that the Scripture prophecies are "a book of falsehoods," as Tom Paine's accusation in his blasphemous Age of Reason (Part 2, pages 44, 47). Let the reader judge for himself from the following. Almost 100 years before the event, the Lord announced through Isaiah that Babylon should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians. "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them. . . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. . . Go up, O Elam [the ancient name of Persia]; besiege, O Media. . . Babylon is fallen" (Isa. 13:17, 19; 21:2, 9). Utterly unlikely as such a catastrophe then appeared, nevertheless, Herodotus and Xenophon record its literal fulfillment! Again, Daniel, more than 200 years before the event, foretold the overthrow of the Medo-Persian empire by the arms of Greece, under the direction of Alexander the Great, depicting the government of the latter under the symbol of a he-goat with a notable horn between his eyes. That prophecy, in figurative language, is found in Daniel 8:3-7, and then (vv. 20-21) its meaning is explained in plain terms: "the ram which thou sawest having two horns, are the kings of Media and Persia. And the

rough goat is the king of Grecia, and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king." Ask the historians of those times, Diodorus and Plutarch, if that were a falsehood! In his Antiquities (Jud. 11:8) Josephus tells of Alexander's journey to Jerusalem for the purpose of dealing severely with the Jews, and how that when he was shown by the high priest a copy of the prophecy of Daniel announcing that a Grecian monarch should overthrow Persia, was so deeply impressed that, contrary to his invariable course, he showed remarkable favour to the Jews. The same Daniel went on to announce that upon the death of Alexander his vast empire should be divided between four of his principal generals, each of whom should have an extensive dominion (8:8, 22), which, as profane historians record, is precisely what took place. But more—he also predicted that out of one of those four branches of the Grecian empire would arise one who, at first weak and obscure, should become "exceeding great," blatant and impious, and that he would meet with no ordinary end (8:9, 12, 23-25). Therein was accurately described the infamous career of Antiochus Epiphanies, king of Syria. In that remarkable prophecy it was plainly intimated that that monster should, by means of flattery and treachery, accomplish his evil designs; and because of the degeneracy of the Jews would be permitted for a time to ravish their country, profane their temple, and put many of them to death; yet, that in the heyday of his career he should be cut off by a sudden visitation from Heaven. All of which was fulfilled to the letter! Daniel also went on to herald the rise of yet a fourth kingdom. As he foretold that the Babylonian should be succeeded by the Medo-Persian and it by the Grecian, so in turn would this be vanquished by another yet more powerful. It is described as being "strong as iron: for as much as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all" (2:40); and as "diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful" and which "shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down and break it in pieces" (7:19, 23). Therein was given, more than 500 years beforehand, a delineation of the Roman empire, as differing from the others in its democratic form of government, in the irresistible might of its military power, and in its world-wide dominion (compare Luke 2:1). Finally, Daniel announced that "in the days of these kings" (2:44) should "the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (2:44; 7:13, 14). And it was in the days of the Caesars that the Son of God became incarnate and established His spiritual kingdom, which, despite all the efforts of Satan and his emissaries to overthrow it, continues to this very hour. What proofs of Divine inspiration are these! But let us now come to a phenomenon which falls more immediately before our own observation, namely, the Jews. To the man of affairs the Jews present an interesting, yet perplexing problem, for they are the greatest paradox of the ages. No other nation was so highly favored by God, yet none has ever been so severely chastised by Him. They are the only people to whom God ever gave a land, yet the only one which for so many centuries have been without one. They are the only nation to whom God ever immediately gave a king, yet for 2,000 years they have been without a ruler or head. They are the outstanding miracle of history. Scattered throughout the earth, they are yet a unit; dispersed among the Gentiles, yet unassimilated by them. They are not wanted anywhere, yet because of their financial strength, needed everywhere. Taxed and plundered as no others have ever been, yet the wealthiest of all people. Persecuted and slaughtered as no other nation, yet miraculously preserved from annihilation. The Bible alone supplies the key to their history. Not only so—the Bible described, in numerous particulars, their history long in advance. We will now single out but a few from the many scores. Two thousand years before the event, their conquest by the Romans and the terrors of the siege of Jerusalem were graphically depicted: see Deuteronomy 28:49-57—the passage is too lengthy to quote here, but let the reader be sure to consult it. The worldwide dispersion of the Jews was foretold centuries in advance: "And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, and from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (Deut. 28:64). The restless migrating of the Jews was made known ages before their actual dispersion: "And among those nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee a trembling heart, and

failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind" (Deut. 28:65). So literally has that been fulfilled that "the wandering Jew" has become a proverbial expression adopted by all modern nations! The taunts universally passed upon them were prophetically declared: "thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee" (Deut. 28:37). Who has not heard the expression, "as greedy as a Jew"! When one man gets the better of another by means of tricky dealings, it has become the custom throughout the English-speaking world to say "he Jew'd me." Literally has he become a "Proverb and a byword." Their survival, despite all the efforts of men to exterminate them, was made known: "when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not... destroy them utterly" (Lev. 26:44). The preservation of their national distinctness was expressly predicted: "I, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). Though scattered throughout the whole earth, they still subsist—unassimilated by the Gentiles—as a distinct people! And so we might go on. Let the reader carefully bear in mind that all of those fore-announcements were made upwards of 3,000 years ago! Such forecasts manifestly render imposture out of the question: they must have been God-breathed. We now call attention to that which is central in prophecy, namely, the amazing description supplied of the Messiah many centuries before He came to this earth. A full portrait of Him was drawn in advance: one inspired artist after another adding fresh details, until the picture was complete. The Prophets, with one consent, gave witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that nothing remarkable befell Him and nothing great was done by Him which they did not foretell. Those prophecies were in the hands of the Jews, and translated into the Greek, generations before His birth, and were so well known that the Apostle Paul could say to king Agrippa that he taught no things, "than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead" (Acts 26:22, 23). Thus did the fulfillment exactly correspond to the predictions made long before, for it pleased God to supply such an exact description of the Messiah that His identity should be indubitably established when He appeared among men: and thus the Jews were condemned by their Prophets for rejecting Him. The supernatural character of our Lord's humanity was declared when it was said that He should be the woman's "Seed" (Gen. 3:15), unbegotten by a man: conceived and born of a "virgin" (Isa. 7:14). In Genesis 9:25-28, it was made known through which of the three sons of Noah the Messiah should issue, namely, Shem: for God would "dwell" in his "tents." Later, it was revealed that Christ, according to the flesh, should be of the Abrahamic stock (Gen. 22:18, and cf. Matthew 1:1). Still further was the compass narrowed, for of the twelve sons of Abraham's grandson, Judah was chosen (Gen. 49:10). Out of all the families of Judah, He would spring from the house of Jesse (Isa. 11:1). The place of His birth was specified (Micah 5:2). The very time of His advent was mentioned (Dan. 9:24-26). So definite were the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ that the hope of Israel became the Messianic hope: all their expectations centered in His appearing. It is therefore the more remarkable that their sacred Scriptures contained another set of prophecies, telling of His being despised by His own nation and put to a shameful death. Though Christ would preach good tidings to the meek, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captives of sin and Satan (Isa. 61:1), and though He should open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and make the lame leap as a hart (Isa. 35:5, 6), yet utterly incredible as it appeared, He would be "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). His back would be smitten, the hair plucked out of His cheeks, and His face covered with the vile spittle of those who hated Him (Isa. 1:6). He would be sold for "thirty pieces of silver" (Zech. 11:13), brought as a lamb to the slaughter, taken from prison and judgment, "cut off out of the land of the living" (Isa. 53:8). His death by crucifixion was revealed a thousand years beforehand (Psa. 22:1). So, too, His being crucified with malefactors (Isa. 53:12), His being derided upon the Cross (Ps. 22:7, 8), His being offered vinegar to drink (Psa. 69:21), as well as the soldiers gambling for His garments (Ps. 22:18)—were all described. It was also foretold that He should

rise from the dead (Ps. 16:1, 2), and ascend into Heaven (Ps. 68:18). But perhaps the most remarkable feature about the prophecies concerning Christ is their paradoxical character. He was to be the seed of David, which should proceed out of his bowels (2 Sam. 7:12), and at the same time be David's "Lord" (Ps. 110:1). He was to be both "the Son of man" (Dan. 7:13) and "the mighty God" (Isa. 9:6); "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3), yet "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows" (Ps. 45:7). He was to be One in whom Jehovah's "soul delighted" (Isa. 42:), yet "smitten of God and afflicted" (Isa. 53:4). In one passage it was fore-announced, "Thou art fairer than the children of men" (Ps. 45:2), in another, "His visage was so marred more than any man" (Isa. 52:14). It was said that, "Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing" (Dan. 9:26, margin), yet "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:7). He would "make His grave with the wicked" (Isa. 53:9), yet would be made "higher than the kings of the earth" (Psa. 89:27). The fulfillment in New Testament times of those apparently glaring contradictions evinced there was perfect harmony between them; yet is it not evident that such seeming inconsistencies as those had ever been inserted in an imposture! Now we submit to the skeptical reader that the fulfillment of all those prophecies demonstrated the Divine origin of the Book which contains them. They were given not in the form of a vague generalization, but with a precision and minuteness which no human sagacity could possibly have supplied. Again and again have men attempted to foretell the future, but only to meet with failure; the anticipations of the most far-seeing are repeatedly mocked by the irony of events. Man stands before such an impenetrable veil that he knows not what a day may bring forth. How then shall we explain the hundreds of detailed prophecies recorded in the Scriptures which were fulfilled to the letter centuries after they were given? Only one explanation is rational, adequate, and satisfactory: they were revealed by God Himself. It is the prerogative of God alone to declare the end from the beginning, and the numerous, varied, and detailed predictions recorded in the Bible, demonstrate beyond a doubt that that Book is His own inspired and infallible Word. The prophecies of Scripture are supernatural: nothing in the remotest degree resembling or even aiming to do so, is to be found in any of the religions of the world. Prophecy is as truly the product of Omniscience as miracles are of Omnipotence.

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