

Fulfillment of Biblical Prophecy in History

There are many ways to verify the reliability of scripture from both internal evidences of transmission and agreement, to external confirmation through archeology and science. But perhaps the most persuasive argument can be found in the area of prophecy. If a book accurately and repeatedly predicts the future, it can safely be said that something special is going on, perhaps even something supernatural. And there are so many prophecies in the scriptures that it should be easy to take a look and decide if the Bible is supernatural. There Are So Many Fulfilled Prophecies! In fact, there are so many fulfilled prophecies in the Bible that it is hard to know where to begin! A simple search on the internet will provide you with literally hundreds of sites listing a multitude of fulfilled prophecies in both the Old and New Testaments. It's difficult to know where to begin here in our limited discussion of the issue, so we'll focus narrowly on some of the biggest and best known of prophecies!

1. The Prophecies of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre and Edom

Let's take a look at a few Bible prophecies that were fulfilled about 2500 years ago when the ancient kingdoms and cities of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre and Edom were destroyed. The Bible makes the assertion that these entities were destroyed because they had sought to destroy the Holy Land of Israel and the people of Israel (the Jews).

2. Babylon Will Rule Over Judah for 70 Years

You can read the first such prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11-12. This prophecy was written sometime from 626 to about 586 BC and was not fulfilled until about 609 BC to 539 BC (approximately 50 years later, depending on your calculation)

3. Jews Suffer and Babylon Punished

Jeremiah 25:11-12

"...This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the Lord, "and will make it desolate forever."

In this passage of scripture, Jeremiah said that the Jews would suffer 70 years of Babylonian domination, and that after this was over, Babylon would be punished. Both parts of this prophecy were fulfilled! In 609 BC, Babylon captured the last Assyrian king and took over the holdings of the Assyrian empire, which included the land of Israel. Babylon then began to flex its muscles by taking many Jews as captives to Babylon and by destroying Jerusalem and the Temple. This domination of the Jews ended in 539 BC, when Cyrus, a leader of Persians and Medes, conquered Babylon, bringing an end to the empire. The prophecy also had another fulfillment: the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem's Temple in 586 BC, but the Jews rebuilt it and consecrated it 70 years later, in 516 BC. Restoring the Temple showed, in a very important way, that the effects of Babylonian domination had indeed come to an end.

4. Babylon's Gates Will Open for Cyrus

If you read Isaiah 45:1 (written perhaps between 701 and 681 BC), you will find a prophecy that was ultimately fulfilled hundreds of years later in 539 BC.

Isaiah 45:1

"This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut..."

In this passage, the prophet said God would open the gates of Babylon for Cyrus and his attacking army. Despite Babylon's remarkable defenses, which included moats, and walls that were more than 70-feet thick and 300-feet high (with 250 watchtowers) Cyrus was able to enter the city and conquer it. Cyrus and his troops accomplished it by diverting the flow of the Euphrates River into a large lake basin. Cyrus then was able to march his army across the riverbed and into the city!

5. Babylon's Kingdom Will Be Permanently Overthrown

In Isaiah 13:19 (written between 701 and 681 BC) there exists yet another prophecy that was not fulfilled until 539 BC.

Isaiah 13:19

Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians' pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah.

Here, Isaiah tells us that Babylon would be overthrown, permanently. History confirms the fact that following Cyrus' destruction of Babylon in 539 BC, it never again rose to power as an empire. You've got to remember, however, that before the time of Cyrus, Babylon had been defeated by the Assyrian Empire as well, But Babylon was able to recover and later conquer the Assyrian Empire. In light of this reality, I'm sure many people doubted Isaiah when he proclaimed this prophecy. In spite of this, and just as Isaiah predicted, the Babylonian empire was defeated, and never recovered from Cyrus' conquest.

6. Babylon Will Be Reduced to Swampland

In Isaiah 14:23 (written between 701 and 681 BC), the prophet makes yet another prediction that does not come true until 539 BC.

Isaiah 14:23

"I will turn her into a place for owls and into swampland; I will sweep her with the broom of destruction," declares the Lord Almighty."

The prophet makes the bold claim that Babylon, which had been a world power at two different times in history, would be brought to a humble and final end. But not only that, Isaiah claims that Babylon would be reduced to swampland! Well, after Cyrus conquered Babylon in 539 BC, the kingdom never again rose to power, that is certain. And history tells us that the buildings of Babylon fell into a gradual state of ruin during the next several centuries. Interestingly, when archaeologists excavated Babylon during the 1800s, they discovered that some parts of the city

could not be dug up because they were under a water table that had risen over the years!

7. The Jews Will Survive Babylonian Rule and Return Home

In Jeremiah 32:36-37, (written from about 626 and 586 BC), yet another prophet makes a bold prediction that was ultimately fulfilled in 536 BC.

Jeremiah 32:36-37

"You are saying about this city, 'By the sword, famine and plague it will be handed over to the king of Babylon'; but this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety."

In this passage, Jeremiah said that the Jews would survive their captivity in Babylon and return home, and both parts of this prophecy were ultimately fulfilled. Many Jews had been taken as captives to Babylon beginning around 605 BC. But, in 538 BC, they were released from captivity and many eventually returned to their homeland.

8. The Ninevites Will Be Drunk in Their Final Hours

In Nahum 1:10 (written around 614 BC) the prophet predicts the condition of the Ninevites at the time of their demise.

Nahum 1:10

"They will be entangled among thorns and drunk from their wine; they will be consumed like dry stubble."

In this passage, and once again in Nahum 3:11, the prophet said that during the final hours of the attack on Nineveh, the Ninevites would be drunk! Well, guess what, there is evidence that this prophecy was actually fulfilled! According to the ancient historian Diodorus Siculus: "The Assyrian king gave much wine to his soldiers. Deserters told this to the enemy, who attacked that night." Siculus compiled his historical works about 600 years after the fall of Nineveh, and in doing so, confirmed the Biblical account!

9. Nineveh Will Be Destroyed By Fire

Once again, in Nahum 3:15 (written around 614 BC) the prophet makes a prediction which ultimately did come true.

Nahum 3:15

"There the fire will devour you; the sword will cut you down and, like grasshoppers, consume you..."

The prophet said that Nineveh would be damaged by fire. Archaeologists unearthed the site during the 1800s and found a layer of ash covering the ruins. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "...Nineveh suffered a defeat from which it never recovered. Extensive traces of ash, representing the sack of the city by Babylonians, Scythians, and Medes in 612 BC, have been found in many parts of the Acropolis. After 612 BC the city ceased to be important..."

10. Tyre Will Be Attacked By Many Nations

In Ezekiel 26:3 (written between 587-586 BC) the prophet predicts the attacks on Tyre that occurred in 573 BC, 332 BC, and 1291 AD.

Ezekiel 26:3

“therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves.”

The prophet said that Tyre, the Phoenician Empire's most powerful city, would be attacked by many nations, because of its treatment of Israel. At about the time that Ezekiel delivered this prophecy, Babylon had begun a 13-year attack on Tyre's mainland. Later, in about 332 BC, Alexander the Great conquered the island of Tyre and brought an end to the Phoenician Empire. Then, after that, Tyre later fell again under the rule of the Romans, the Crusaders and the Moslems, who destroyed the city yet again, in 1291!

11. Tyre's Stones, Timber and Soil Will Be Cast Into the Sea

In a remarkable prediction, the prophet writes in Ezekiel 26:12 (written between 587-586 BC) that the stone, timber and soil of Tyre will be thrown into the sea! This was fulfilled in 333-332 BC.

Ezekiel 26:12

“They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea.”

The prophet said that Tyre's stones, timber and soil would be thrown into the sea. That's probably a fitting description of how Alexander the Great built a land bridge from the mainland to the island of Tyre when he attacked in 333-332 BC. It is believed that he took the rubble from Tyre's mainland ruins and tossed it - stones, timber and soil - into the sea, to build the land bridge (which is still there).

12. The Jews Will Avenge the Edomites

In Ezekiel 25:14 (written between 593-571 BC), the prophet predicts that the Jews will eventually have revenge against the Edomites. This was not fulfilled, however for over 400 years (until approximately 100 BC)

Ezekiel 25:14

“I will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they will deal with Edom in accordance with my anger and my wrath; they will know my vengeance’, declares the Sovereign Lord.”

Ezekiel said that the Jews would one day take vengeance on Edom, a nation that had often warred with the Jews. When Ezekiel delivered this prophecy, he and many other Jews were living as captives in Babylon. They didn't have control of their own country, let alone anyone else's. But, about 400 years later, Jews regained independence for Jerusalem and the surrounding area during the "Hasmonaean Period." During this time, the Jewish priest-king John Hyrcanus I

defeated the Edomites. According to the Columbia Encyclopedia, Fifth Edition: "Edomite history was marked by continuous hostility and warfare with Jews... At the end of the second century B.C., they were subdued by Hasmonaean priest-king John Hyrcanus I..."

13. Edom Will Be Toppled and Humbled

In Jeremiah 49:16 (written sometime from 626 to about 586 BC) the prophet predicts that Edom will be toppled. This was fulfilled in approximately 100 BC:

Jeremiah 49:16

"The terror you inspire and the pride of your heart have deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks, who occupy the heights of the hill. Though you build your nest as high as the eagle's, from there I will bring you down," declares the Lord."

Jeremiah said that Edom, a long-time enemy of Israel, would be destroyed. Edom's capital city, Petra, was carved out of a mountain side and had great natural defenses. Nonetheless, it was destroyed and the kingdom of Edom no longer exists. Today, Petra is part of Jordan. The city was conquered by the Romans in the year 106 AD but flourished again shortly after that. But a rival city, Palmyra, eventually took most of the trade away and Petra began to decline. Moslems conquered Petra in the 7th Century and Crusaders conquered it in the 12th Century. Petra gradually fell into ruin.

14. The Greatest Old Testament Prophecy of All

There are literally hundreds of other fulfilled prophecies that we could describe here, but clearly one stands head and shoulders above the rest, and we really need to take a minute to describe it. While the Jews were certainly comforted by prophecies that predicted that their enemies would eventually be destroyed, there was a far more comforting prophecy that had been described in the Old Testament. It was a prophecy that predicted the coming of a Messiah, a savior who would deliver the Jews. While there were dozens of messianic prophecies in the Old Testament scriptures, one of these was incredibly specific in its claims. As we examine this prophecy, we can confirm the supernatural and divine inspiration of the Bible.

The Coming of the Messiah

In 538 B.C. Daniel wrote the following bold prediction:

Daniel 9:25

"So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks of years and sixty-two weeks of years"

In this prophecy, Daniel is claiming that there will be 69 weeks of years between the issuing of a decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the appearance of the Messiah. Now keep in mind that this bold prediction came 538 years before Christ was born.

Now let's investigate a little history, OK? In 464 BC, Artaxerxes, a Persian king, ascended to the

throne. His twentieth year as king would be 464 BC. Nehemiah, the Jewish cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, was deeply concerned with the reports about the ruined condition of Jerusalem which came about as the result of their being defeated (Nehemiah 1:1-4) and as a result, he petitioned the king:

Nehemiah 2:5,6

"Send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it. So it pleased the king to send me".

Scripture then provides us with the exact date of this decree to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem. According to the scriptures the decree is issued "in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king" (Nehemiah 2:1). The Jewish calendar month was Nisan, and since no day is given, it is reasonable to assume that the date would be understood as the first, the Jewish New Year's Day. And, in the Julian calendar we presently use, the corresponding date would be March 5, 444 B.C. This was the day on which the decree was issued to restore and rebuild Jerusalem.

Now let's remember this date, March 5, 444BC and take a look at the appearance of the Messiah. You may recall that the Gospels tell us that Jesus, on numerous occasions, had forbidden his followers to make him known as "the Messiah". He would frequently do miracles and tell the disciples not to tell anyone who had done the miracles because his "hour has not yet come" (John 2:4, 7:6). However, on March 30, 33 A.D., when he entered Jerusalem on a donkey, he rebuked the Pharisees' protest and encouraged the whole multitude of his disciples as they shouted, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord". And Jesus said, "If these become silent, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:38-40). This was the day on which Jesus was publicly declared the Messiah.

Now let's compare the date of the decree (March 5, 444 BC) with the date of Jesus' declaration (March 30, 33 AD). Now before we begin, we need to clarify the fact that the Jewish prophetic year was composed of twelve 30 day months. In other words, the ancient evidence indicates that the Jewish prophetic year had 360 days, not 365 days. Since Daniel states 69 weeks of seven years each, and each year has 360 days, the equation is as follows: $69 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880$ days. In nothing more than a simple mathematical demonstration, the number of days in the period from March 5, 444 B.C. (the twentieth year of Artaxerxes) to March 30, 33 A.D. (the day Jesus entered Jerusalem on the donkey) can be determined at this point.

The time span from 444 B.C. to 33 A.D. is 476 years (remember that 1 B.C. to 1 A.D. is only one year). And if we multiply 476 years x 365.2421879 days per year (corrected for leap years), we get the result of 173,855 days. Now let's add back the difference between March 5 and March 30 (25 days). What is our total? You guessed it, 173,880 days, exactly as Daniel predicted

it.

So What Does Fulfilled Prophecy Prove?

The ancient Jews were careful to use Prophecy as a measuring stick. If someone claimed to be a prophet, yet his predictions did not come true, he was abandoned and his writings did not make it into the canon of scripture. Moses was careful to set this high bar for prophets:

Deuteronomy 18:22

“When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that [is] the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, [but] the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

Moses knew that fulfilled prophecy was an evidence! It was an evidence that God was truly at work in the heart of the prophet, giving him insight to something that only God knew about. The exact fulfillment of all the prophecies that we've talked about from the Old Testament is more than enough to demonstrate the accuracy and divine inspiration of the Bible and the truth of Christianity. Remember, only God can "declare the end from the beginning" and forecast to the very day "things that are not yet done" (Isaiah 46:10).

Isaiah 46:10

“I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will.”