



# “Understanding the Bible”

## Section 4: Why Can We Trust the Bible?

### Unit 4.4: Finding Proof in the Fulfillment of Prophecy



#### I) Promises Made and Promises Kept

- So far in Section 4, we have offered proof for the trustworthiness of Scripture from the vantage points of logic, history, and science. In this unit, we will turn our eyes to the Bible itself as we take a closer look at fulfilled prophecy. It's important to note that prophecy is not fortune telling or some radical form of clairvoyance; biblical prophecies are *promises of God*. God's promises are often specific, intentional, and unique. His promises usually name individual places, events, and people in great detail, and the fulfillment of these promises are typically accomplished in such a way that only the sovereign hand of the Lord come bring them to completion. In **Isaiah 41:26-29**, God Himself challenged His people to measure the truth and power of His prophecies against those of any other religion. And Joshua reminded the Israelites of God's faithfulness in **Joshua 23:14** when he stated, *“...you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed.”* The following list below is just a small portion of God's many promises made and faithfully kept to His covenant people.

#### II) The Seed of Our Salvation

- The first and most important prophecy is the original gospel call that we have referenced multiple times throughout this study. God proclaims to Satan in **Genesis 3:15**, *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”* This seed of the woman is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, as the bruising of His heel by the serpent is the crucifixion, but Christ's bruising of Satan's head is the miraculous resurrection. All prophecies of Scripture swing on the hinges of this promise being fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah.

#### III) Blessed to Be a Blessing

- As God sought to begin unfolding His plan to bring the promise of Genesis 3:15 to fruition, He decided to choose a man and establish a nation to accomplish His will. God chose a man named Abram and a nation from His lineage called Israel to be His chosen people set apart in holiness. **Genesis 12:1-3** says, *“Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* God chose the nation of Israel prophetically to be the vessel that He would reveal Himself to a fallen world, and also to bring His messiah into the world to redeem. As Christ reminded the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in **John 4:22**, *“Salvation is from the Jews.”* It is also stated in **Luke 24:47**, *“...repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”* In other words, the nation of Israel was blessed simply to be a blessing to the rest of creation.

#### IV) A Banishment to Babylon

- Israel may have been the chosen people of God, but their disobedience led to the harsh punishment of exile to Babylon in 586 BC. God warned the Israelites and called them to repentance numerous times. In **Jeremiah 25:8-9** He spoke through the prophet Jeremiah and told Israel that King Nebuchadnezzar would come and destroy the city of Jerusalem. We see in **2 Kings 25:5-7** that destruction and exile took place just as Jeremiah had predicted. This is what led to Jeremiah's somber words in **Lamentations 2:17** when he said, *“The Lord has done what he purposed; he has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.”*

## V) The Rise & Fall of Rulers

- Some of the most dramatic series of prophecies in Scripture are found in the book of Daniel. Right away we see in Chapter 2 that the prophet was forced to interpret a **dream** that Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar had regarding the image of a mighty warrior. Based on Daniel's interpretation of the image in **Daniel 2:37-40**, we discover his prediction that there would be the rising and falling of four kingdoms. History later revealed that these four kingdoms represented in the dream were *Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome*. But possibly the most remarkable aspect of Daniel's interpretation came later in chapter 11, where he gave vivid details of the rise and fall of a ruler whose kingdom would be divided among four generals after his death because he had no heirs. This predication would eventually be fulfilled centuries later by Alexander the Great. In fact, scholars estimate that there are 135 measurable prophecies in Daniel 11 alone that have also been fulfilled by literal, historical events.

## VI) New Terms of a New Covenant

- As God's chosen people, Israel had the **covenant sign** of circumcision and the covenant expectations established in the laws of Moses. But God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah to give a vision of a greater covenant to come. In **Jeremiah 31:31-33** the prophet reveals, "<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,<sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." We see this new covenant established by Christ and fulfilled by His Church. The sign of this covenant is first revealed during the Last Supper. **Luke 22:19-20** says, "<sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' <sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'"

## VII) Putting Together Pieces of a Messianic Puzzle

- The most significant puzzle pieces of biblical prophecy come together to reveal the portrait of Jesus Christ as the promised **Messiah**. There are countless messianic prophecies throughout the Bible, but below are some of the most unique surrounding the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.
  - Birthplace** – Prophecy: **Micah 5:2**; Fulfillment: **Luke 2:1-7**
  - Ministry as a Suffering Servant** – Prophecy: **Isaiah 53:1-4**; Fulfillment: **Luke 9:22, Luke 24:25-27**
  - Wounded and Bruised** – Prophecy: **Isaiah 53:5-6**; Fulfillment: **Matthew 27:26, 29**
  - Compassion for His Accusers** – Prophecy: **Isaiah 53:7**; Fulfillment: **Matthew 27:12-14**
  - Abandonment of Disciples** – Prophecy: **Zechariah 13:7**; Fulfillment: **Matthew 26:56**
  - Crucified Among Thieves** – Prophecy: **Psalms 22:16**; Fulfillment: **Luke 23:32-33**
  - Mocked by Roman Soldiers** – Prophecy: **Psalms 22:7-8**; Fulfillment: **Luke 23:35-38**
  - Lots Casted for His Garments** – Prophecy: **Psalms 22:18**; Fulfillment: **Luke 23:34**
  - Forsaken by God** – Prophecy: **Psalms 22:1**; Fulfillment: **Matthew 27:46**
  - Spirit Committed to God** – Prophecy: **Psalms 31:5**; Fulfillment: **Luke 23:46**
  - Unbroken Bones** – Prophecy: **Psalms 34:20**; Fulfillment: **John 19:33,36**
  - Burial in a Rich Man's Tomb** – Prophecy: **Isaiah 53:8-9**; Fulfillment: **Matthew 27:57-60**
  - Resurrection from the Dead** – Prophecy: **Psalms 16:10**; Fulfillment: **Acts 2:29-31**
  - Ascension to the Right Hand of God** – Prophecy: **Psalms 110:1**; Fulfillment: **Hebrews 1:13**

## VIII) The Scriptures Must Be Fulfilled

- As we bring the discussion of biblical prophecy to a close, perhaps it is best stated by Baptist scholar Carl F.H. Henry who said, "*There is only one real inevitability: it is necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled.*" Christ Himself reminded us of the necessity of Scriptural promises to be kept at His **baptism** in **Matthew 3:15**. After John the Baptist scoffed at why Jesus would need to be baptized, Christ responded, "*Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.*" This is a wonderful reminder to us that God always has and always will stand by His word – and so should we!