

THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

PROPHETIC PROOF

NO HUMAN BEING has the power to predict with certainty precisely what will take place next year or next month, or next week, or even tomorrow. I course, he may hazard a guess regarding the probable pattern of his own life; and, if he has an adequate knowledge of history and a thorough understanding of present tendencies, he may also hazard a guess as to the outworking of affairs in the world at large. But he cannot foretell with any assurance or definiteness just what will occur. Only omniscience can prophesy accurately, and omniscience belongs only to God.

For example, on November 29,1943, the *New Republic* put out a bulletin entitled, "America and the Postwar World," in which this statement was made: "While prophecy is dangerous, on the law of averages it is safe predict that our relations with the rest of the world would be better under a continuing Democratic administration than under a Republican." Now, that statement is significant not because of the political opinion expressed, but because it is a revealing admission of human inability to foretell the future. The writers of that article, who are among the keenest minds in America, in confessing that "prophecy is dangerous" admit that no man, however well-informed, can be certain what will take place on the tomorrows which have yet to dawn.

And for confirmation of those confessions, consider this forecast made by Norvell, the popular astrologer of Hollywood, printed (notice the date) in *Look* magazine, November 21,1939: "In a matter of months Hitler will meet a tragic fate. Death may come to him from an assassin, or by a battle wound in the throat or heart region, or even by suicide. His end will be sudden and violent amidst much confusion. The Spring of 1940 is the period of worst affliction in Hitler's chart but in any event he cannot survive the year." Norvell also predicted, "With the Maginot Line as an impregnable barrier, England and France will invade German Territory, weakening Germany and at last shattering her morale." Norvell very palpably was guessing, not foretelling.

The Bible claims to be a revelation of the plans and purposes of the omniscient Creator.

Certainly that claim cannot be contemptuously ignored; it must be carefully investigated. For if that claim is indeed backed by fulfilled prophecy, Christianity has every right to assert that the Bible is the Word of the living God; and, on the other hand, no skeptical unbeliever has the intellectual or moral right to deny that the Bible is the Word of the living God unless he is able to demonstrate that its prophecies are unfounded guesses.

The famous British soldier, Marshall Wade, laughed at the Christian belief that the Bible is a divine revelation until Bishop Newton, a learned scholar, showed him that several of its prophecies had been specifically fulfilled. Whereupon in amazement the Marshall declared:

“If this point can be proved to satisfaction, there will be no argument against such plain matter of fact; it will certainly convince me, and I believe it will be the readiest way to convince every reasonable man of the truth of revelation.”

Can this point, then, be proved to satisfaction? Is the Bible truly the Word of the living God? Does it contain fulfilled prophecy? Today let me confine myself to a single illustration, the history of the Jews.

First, centuries ago it was predicted that, because of their disobedience to God, the Israelites would be universally scattered.

“The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven days before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth” (Deuteronomy 28:25).

“And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone” (Deuteronomy 28:64).

“My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations” (Hosea 9:17).

The Hebrews, who anciently inhabited Palestine, have been uprooted from their homeland and dispersed to every point of the compass. But how were Moses and Hosea able to foretell the future unless the omniscient God revealed it to them?

Second, centuries ago it was predicted that the Jews, exiled among the Gentiles, would be objects of contempt and terms of derision.

“And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee” (Deuteronomy 28:37).

“And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them” (Jeremiah 24:9).

Explain them as you will, these predictions have been fulfilled; and though we deplore using the name of a race with a glorious heritage as a taunt and a curse, we admit that it is done.

Third, centuries ago it was predicted that Israel would be horribly hounded and brutally persecuted.

“And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:

“And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:

“In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see” (Deuteronomy 28:65-67).

The history of the Jew down through the ages verifies; the literal truth of this prophecy. And in our day its truth has been verified again by the ghastly pogroms of Nazi Germany.

Fourth, centuries ago it was predicted that the troubles of Israel would not be of brief duration but would be indefinitely prolonged. So Moses wrote:

“The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance” (Deuteronomy 28:59).

“Of long continuance” — that was the prophecy regarding the sufferings and sorrows of Abram’s seed. And thus it has been: year in, year out, the innocent Jew has been the scapegoat of the Western civilization. Hounded by Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks, he was hounded even more by imperial Rome, and by Christian Rome — oh, the tragedy of it!—even more viciously still. During the Middle Ages he was treated as an animal rather than a human being. And in modern times, despite the humanitarianism on which we pride ourselves, he has been mercilessly hounded as never before. God grant that in this boasted “land of the free” we shall have the decency and charity and justice never to permit such outrages to occur!

Fifth, centuries ago Jeremiah announced:

“Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of hosts is his name:

“If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever” (Jeremiah 31:35-36).

“Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished” (Jeremiah 46:28).

God has made a full end of the Chaldeans, and the Babylonians. The Edomites are gone; the Ammonites have completely disappeared. But where are the Hebrews? They are still with us! As Dean Milman put it in his great *History of the Jews*:

“Their perpetuity, their national immortality, is at once the most curious problem to the political student and to the religious man a subject of profound and awful admiration.”

Likewise, Disraeli, himself a Jew, once wrote:

“The attempt to extirpate them has been made under the most favorable auspices and on the largest scale; the most considerable means that man could command have been pertinaciously applied to this object for the longest period of recorded time. Egyptian pharaohs, Assyrian kings, Roman emperors, Scandinavian crusaders, Gothic princes, and holy inquisitors, have alike devoted their energies to the fulfillment of this common purpose. Expatriation, exile, captivity, confiscation, torture on the most ingenious, and massacre on the most extensive scale, a curious system of degrading customs and debasing laws which would have broken the heart of any other people, have been tried, and in vain.”

Sixth, centuries ago it was predicted that the Jews, scattered among foreign nations, would manage to retain their identity and remain a separate people. In the Book of Ezekiel you have that forecast in these words:

“And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone” (Ezekiel 20:32).

Only omniscience can foretell the future; and if there are genuine prophecies and fulfillments in the Bible which claims to be the Word of God, what conclusion follows? The Bible must be accepted for what it claims to be. It must be a revelation of the plans and purposes of the all-knowing Creator.

- But, if that is so, then another conclusion follows: When the Bible declares **“All have sinned,”** that statement must be accepted.
- When the Bible declares **“The wages of sin is death,”** that statement must be accepted.
- When the Bible declares **“Christ died for our sins, the Just for the unjust that he might bring us to God,”** that statement must be accepted.
- When the Bible declares **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,”** that statement must be accepted.

Then why not believe in Him and by your own experience verify the Bible’s truth?

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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