

Show the things that are to come

The witness of fulfilled Bible prophecy

1. The Most High rules in the kingdom of men

Geoff Henstock

*“And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19).**

WHEN NEBUCHADNEZZAR dreamed of a massive image composed of various metals, his wise men were unable to divine its meaning. Daniel, however, was able to tell the king of Babylon what it meant, although he freely acknowledged that it was God Who gave him the insight (Dan. 2:28-30). The king was flattered that he was the head of gold, but as he thought about the rest of the details he realised the implication that his kingdom was doomed to be replaced by another inferior régime. This must have troubled Nebuchadnezzar, and in Daniel 3 he erected a massive gold image, which would appear to have been a direct affront to the God of heaven, an attempt to circumvent the prophecy of Daniel 2.

Of course, Nebuchadnezzar’s attempt to circumvent the declared will of God was always doomed to failure. In Daniel 4 he experienced a further dream, this time of a massive tree that flourished and then was hewn down. On this occasion the intent of the dream was revealed within the dream itself: “The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the lowest of men” (v. 17).

Daniel confirmed that the cutting down of the tree indicated that Nebuchadnezzar himself personally would be eclipsed for a time, and so it came to pass at a time when the king least

expected it and when he appeared to be at the zenith of his power (vv. 30,31). Thus it was that Nebuchadnezzar came to appreciate a truth that so many other powerful rulers have never understood: that God rules in

the kingdom of men, and that He manipulates world affairs to bring about His plan and purpose.

Daniel is full of prophecies revealed in elaborate detail, so much so that many critics of the Bible have been forced to claim that the book was written *after* the events of which it prophesies. Such claims were especially prevalent in the nineteenth century; Brother Robert Roberts wrote a pamphlet¹ specifically addressing these claims, and others also have refuted them.² To acknowledge that the words in Daniel predate the events they describe would be to concede the authority of prophecy and therefore its Divine inspiration. Modern discoveries, however, have made it increasingly difficult to maintain this position. It may be significant that leading antagonists in the battle against the Bible today do not even mention this once common argument; Richard Dawkins, for instance, makes no reference to it in his book *The God Delusion*.

But even if we were to ignore Daniel, there is ample evidence in the prophetic Word to prove that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men” and that future events have been predicted well in advance.

* Scripture quotations in this article are from the RV.

1. *Daniel and his Great Fulfilled Prophecy of Chapter Eleven. A Brief Demonstration of the Authenticity of the Book of Daniel.*
2. For example, Brother Islip Collyer, *Daniel and Christ*, pp. 1-18.

Tyre

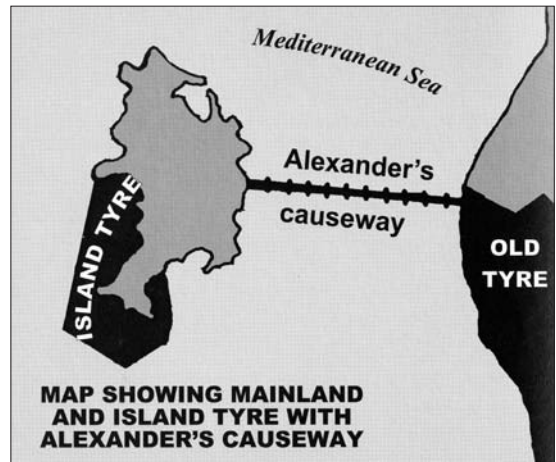
TYRE at one time was the greatest mercantile power in the ancient world. God decreed, however, that it would be overthrown. In Ezekiel 26 the prophet outlined God's judgement on Tyre. The prophecy is explicit about the fate of Tyre: "they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her a bare rock" (vv. 4,5). And so, what was once the site of ancient Tyre on the Mediterranean coast in southern Lebanon is now a rock platform scraped bare.

But the prophecy does not just predict the eventual fate of the city. Ezekiel revealed in graphic detail the two-stage process by which the city would be destroyed over a lengthy period of time. In the sixth century B.C. the mainland city of Tyre was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel predicted this, even mentioning the king by name (vv. 7-11). Thus it was that Babylon attacked and destroyed the city after a siege of thirteen years.

Given the length of the siege, it seems likely that Babylon overcame both the mainland city and the inhabitants on an island half a mile offshore; even so, she was unable to destroy completely the power of Tyre because it was a maritime power and could find refuge in the sea. "It was a case of a conflict between the elephant and the whale. Babylon was a land power; Tyre was a sea power".³ Babylon was denied the satisfaction of snuffing out Tyre completely, but she was compensated for this by God (29:18-20).

After the Babylonians left, the merchants of Tyre revived their power on the off-shore island rather than rebuild the more vulnerable city on the mainland. Tyre again flourished until the time of Alexander the Great, when it came under further attack in 332 B.C. Ezekiel had said that many nations would come against Tyre (26:3), not just Babylon, and so it was to be.

This fact is reflected in the change of pronouns from singular in verses 7-11 (referring to Nebuchadnezzar) to plural in verse 12. The Tyrians might have felt safe in their island fortress, but Alexander the Great, using the rubble of the destroyed mainland settlement to construct a causeway to link the island with the mainland, was able to reach and overthrow the island city. In the process he literally fulfilled the terms of verse 12: "they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the waters". That causeway, since expanded



Taken from Ezekiel by Brother John Allfree, with permission from the CSSS

by the accumulation of sand, remains today, a testimony to the "more sure word of prophecy".

Babylon and Assyria

BABYLON itself met a fate even more extreme than that of Tyre. Powers rise and fall. While Bible students understand that this is in accordance with the purpose of God, even atheists acknowledge that this is a fact of geopolitical history. If you were to nominate almost any man-made structure or system you could be certain that, given enough time, it would fall.

Many of the great cities of the past have been conquered and pillaged only to rise again. Rome, Athens, Jerusalem and Tyre are examples. But when the prophet spoke about the overthrow of Babylon he spoke in terms of finality. It was not just going to be overthrown; it was never to be rebuilt. To say that something will happen is one thing; to say that something can never happen is another thing altogether.

Isaiah wrote at a time when the Babylonians were still rising in power, about two hundred years prior to the fall of Babylon. Yet he was explicit in declaring that, although in the interim it would rise to become the greatest power in the earth, it would be defeated. He spoke of the slaughter and rape of the people of the city (13:15,16). These words could be true of any city captured by an enemy. But Isaiah went further and said:

"Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall

3. Brother W. H. Boulton, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, p. 116.

never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged" (vv. 19-22).

It shall never be inhabited! This must have seemed an unlikely boast about such a mighty city located in a fertile region. Yet history has borne it out. 2,500 years after it fell, it remains a ruinous heap.

The fate of Babylon is similar to the fate of Nineveh. At one time Assyria had been the dominant power in the Middle East, but it too came to a sudden end, to rise no more. Nahum had prophesied that Nineveh would disappear suddenly:

"Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy marshals as the swarms of grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy worthies are at rest: thy people are scattered upon the mountains, and there is none to gather them. There is no assuaging of thy hurt; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee clap the hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (Nah. 3:17-19).

Locusts appear suddenly, devastate an area, and then disappear without trace. So it was with Nineveh, both the city and the people, as the prophet implies. "The disappearance of the Assyrian people will always remain an unique and striking phenomena in ancient history".⁴ What was true of the people was equally true of the city. Less than 300 years after its overthrow, Alexander the Great passed by the site of Nineveh without even realising he was in the vicinity.

4. *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 3, p. 130.

"The study of prophecy is no mere academic pursuit. Like all Bible study, it should impact on our daily lives . . . Noah knew from prophecy that God would bring an end to the world of the ungodly, and so, 'moved with fear, [he] prepared an ark to the saving of his house' (Heb. 11:7). We should never forget that, according to Bible prophecy, the society in which we now live is moving towards inevitable judgement, and we need to order our lives so as to escape that judgement."

Tony Benson, *The Pen of a Ready Writer*, The Testimony, 2010, p. 86

Israel

IT REQUIRES Divine inspiration to say without fear of contradiction that a city will not be restored, and the same might be said of a statement that a nation would be severely punished yet never destroyed. And that is exactly what is said about Israel. Jeremiah told Israel that, although God would scatter them into all nations, He would not allow them to become assimilated into the nations amongst whom they were scattered:

"fear thou not, O Jacob My servant, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee with judgement, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished" (30:10,11).

Many nations have been dispossessed of their homelands. Most, like the Assyrians, have simply disappeared, never to be seen again as an identifiable race. This was not the case with Israel. Scattered to all parts of the earth, so often persecuted and oppressed, the Jews nevertheless retained their distinct identity. For nearly 1,800 years after the Romans had expelled them from their homeland, there were legal impediments to their return to that land. But in these last days, in accordance with prophecies such as Jeremiah's, the Jews have been allowed to return to Israel and reclaim their independence.

"Ye are My witnesses", Isaiah had said of the Jews (43:10,12). The God Who decreed that they should be punished by being scattered, lives, and rules in the kingdom of men; it was impossible, therefore, for His witnesses to die. Like Nebuchadnezzar, the critics and politicians might try to circumvent prophecy, but, like Nebuchadnezzar, their attempts will be vain. God rules! The kingdom of men will soon be replaced by the stone-power of the Kingdom of God. The prophets assure us of this.