

but we must take an interest in those events in the world which relate to prophecy. A Bible student living in Judea in A.D. 70 who chose not to watch the movements of the Roman armies as they manoeuvred in the Land was in danger of being trapped. You had to be watchful in order to “see Jerusalem compassed with armies”.

#### Step Four—pray

As well as watching there was also a need to pray: “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Mt. 24:20). This prayer relates to a specific detail about the prophecy, the need to flee. It is a prayer which is based on a correct understanding of the prophecy; as Paul wrote: “I will pray with the understanding also” (1 Cor. 14:15). When we pray about the time of the end and the return of Christ, we need to know what God intends to happen. John wrote: “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us” (1 Jno. 5:14). Prophecy shows us what “His will” is with regard to many things at the time of the end. Therefore, the more we understand about the prophecies

of the time of the end the more powerful our prayers will be.

#### Step Five—do the right thing

We have seen the armies gathering; now is the critical phase. As it says in Luke: “the desolation thereof is nigh”. How soon is “nigh”? We could debate this and argue for different lengths of time. This is a tempting approach. Anything that leads to delay is tempting because the alternative, to flee and leave everything behind, is against our nature. But this would be fatal. We have to “flee into the mountains” without delay.

#### Epilogue

Would we have escaped if we had been living in Judea in A.D. 70? The steps above may seem obvious. But would we have followed them? Well, the answer lies in our response to the prophecy about *our* time later on in Luke 21. Do we understand this prophecy? Do we know what “things” (v. 28) are going to come to pass? If we do then are we doing the right thing? Are we lifting up our heads or are we looking downwards to the things of this life, like those who would not flee in A.D. 70?

## Multiple fulfilments of scripture

Tony Benson

**T**HE MULTIPLE fulfilment of scripture is a very significant concept, which the Bible student soon becomes aware of. This article attempts to establish some principles regarding this. We use the phrase ‘multiple fulfilment’ rather than ‘dual fulfilment’ because sometimes scripture can have more than two fulfilments, and the word ‘scripture’ rather than ‘prophecy’ because a historical account, for example, can have a further application if it is typical of future events.

It is suggested that there are three ways in which prophecies can have more than one fulfilment:

- 1 prophecies that are fulfilled two or more times because the circumstances that fulfil the prophecy arise more than once;
- 2 prophecies that have their complete fulfilment in the long term but an initial fulfilment in things that are typical of the complete fulfilment;

- 3 prophecies that are fulfilled completely initially, but this fulfilment is typical of something else to come.

There is only one way to explain further what we mean by these ideas, and that is by giving examples.

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### 1. Prophecies fulfilled whenever a given situation exists

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#### Blessing and cursing on Israel

Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 foretell the blessings for obedience or curses for disobedience that would come upon Israel in their history, from the entry into the Land onwards. There is a wealth of quotations from and allusions to these chapters in later books of the Bible, and other occasions when situations arose which fulfilled parts of these prophecies can be discovered from secular history.

As an example, Deuteronomy 28:49 says that, if Israel persisted in wickedness, "The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand". Three fulfilments of this prophecy can be discerned, the first two by quotations from the verse in later Scripture, the third chiefly by historical facts:

- 1 **By Assyria.** In Isaiah 5:26 the Assyrians and their allies are described as "nations from far" whom God would bring swiftly upon Israel to judge them. In Isaiah 33:19 the Assyrians are referred to as "a people of a deep speech that thou canst not perceive; of a strange tongue that thou canst not understand" (RV). In Hosea 8:1 God says of the Assyrians: "He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord".
- 2 **By Babylon.** Jeremiah 5:15 refers to Babylon in the following terms: "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say". The eagle figure is used of Babylon in Jeremiah 4:13; 48:40; 49:22, and elsewhere in the writings of prophets of the Babylonian era.
- 3 **By Rome.** Clearly Rome was also a nation from far, speaking a strange language, which came in judgement against Israel. The words of Matthew 24:28, "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together", whilst relevant to Rome, are more general in import, and are best taken as an indication that nations would continue to invade the Land and fulfil the prophecy.

### Prophecies about Jesus

It may seem strange to think of prophecies about Jesus having repeated fulfilments. Surely such were either fulfilled at his first or at his second coming. This is the case with many of the prophecies about Jesus, but not all. There is space for just one example of a prophecy about Jesus with repeated fulfilments.

The opening verses of Psalm 2 are commonly regarded as prophetic of the reaction of the nations to Christ when he returns. However, in Acts 4:25,26 they are quoted by the early believers as applying to the opposition of both Gentile and Jewish rulers to Christ at his first coming.

Does this mean that the words cannot be applied to what happens when Christ returns? Surely not. They are prophetic of the reaction of the nations to God's anointed one whom He has sent, and will send again, to instruct them. They did not and will not accept the constraints involved in submitting to him. At his first coming, when he was lowly and humble, they arrested and crucified him; at his second coming in power and glory they will raise armies against him.

Does this exhaust the application of these verses? By no means. As Revelation 20:7-10 reveals, there will be a further fulfilment at the end of the Millennium, when the nations once more gather together against Christ.

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## 2. Prophecies with a complete fulfilment in the long-term and a typical fulfilment first

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1. **Psalm 72.** Clearly this psalm is a prophecy of the Kingdom. The origin of the psalm directs us to a preliminary fulfilment, however, for it seems to be a psalm given by David at the end of his life, when Solomon was about to take over as king. The reign of Solomon was typical in many respects of the coming Kingdom of God. Let us look at some of the details:

- **vv. 2,4** refer to the king executing justice. Solomon was given wisdom by God for this purpose (1 Kgs. 3:11,12);
- **v. 7:** there is "abundance of peace" in the Messianic Kingdom. Solomon had "peace on all sides" (1 Kgs. 4:24);
- **v. 11:** Messiah rules over "all nations". Solomon reigned over "all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines" (1 Kgs. 4:21);
- **v. 15:** Gold from Sheba; see 1 Kings 10:2.

Not all the details were fulfilled by Solomon, however. He did not have dominion "to the ends of the earth" (v. 8). "All nations" did not serve him (v. 11). His reign was not an everlasting reign (v. 17). The psalm in all its detail will only be fulfilled when Christ rules over the worldwide Kingdom of God. Nevertheless the psalm contributes strongly to the overall picture of Solomon's reign as a type of the Kingdom.

2. **Micah 4 and 5.** Clearly this is a prophecy of the work of Christ, mainly to do with his Kingdom, but also with reference to his birth (5:2). The setting of this prophecy is evidently the time

of Hezekiah, when the Assyrians invaded the Land (5:5,6), and the prophecy helps to build up a picture of Hezekiah as a type of Christ and the overthrow of the Assyrians as a type of the overthrow of the hosts of Gog. Again a look at some details will establish the point:

- As a result of the overthrow of the Assyrian host, representatives of the nations came to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:23; cf. Mic. 4:1);
- Following the overthrow of Assyria, the Jews would “plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof” (Isa. 37:30; cf. Mic. 4:4);
- The remnant (Isa. 37:4,31,32; cf. Mic. 5:3,7,8);
- “The strength of the Lord” (Mic. 5:4). This is the meaning of the name Hezekiah.

### 3. Prophecies with a complete fulfilment in the short term and a typical fulfilment later

These are prophecies which were completely fulfilled fairly soon after they were uttered, but the fulfilment is typical of something greater to come, so that the prophecy has a further application. All the details are fulfilled in the immediate fulfilment, but all the details are not necessarily fulfilled in the remote fulfilment.

**1. Isaiah 17.** Here is a prophecy which has its complete fulfilment in events close to the prophet’s own day, the invasion by the Assyrian army. Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel are

first affected (vv. 1-3), but the invading army brings judgement upon Judah until it is overthrown suddenly in a night (v. 14). Yet the Assyrian invasion is a type of the Gogian invasion to come, so we can study the prophecy with this in mind also; a host from the north, coming down through Syria, rushing against Israel, and being overthrown suddenly. The prophecy does not have to be applied in every detail to the Gogian invasion, though; for example, there are no idols in the land now, as there were when the prophet wrote (v. 8).

**2. Psalm 41.** This psalm clearly has as its background a time when David’s enemies were rising up against him, desiring his death (v. 5). The reference to his close friend rising up against him (v. 9) shows that the setting must be the time of Absalom’s rebellion, when Ahithophel turned against David. Yet verse 9 is quoted by Jesus with reference to the treachery of Judas Iscariot (Jno. 13:18).

This does not mean that all the details of the psalm apply to Christ. Verse 4, where David asks God to have mercy on him and forgive his sin, clearly does not apply to the sinless one. The quotation of this psalm by Jesus is not an indication that we should look at the psalm in isolation as a prophecy about Jesus, and try to apply all the details to him. It directs us to look at the historical account of the rebellion of Absalom, and the psalms that have it as their setting, to build up a type of Christ.

## The continuous-historic approach to prophecy

Tony Benson

**W**HAT IS MEANT by the continuous-historic approach to prophecy? The term is usually applied to the Apocalypse and to the view that it is a prophecy fulfilled over the centuries, from the time it was given to the return of Christ and beyond. However, this type of prophecy is found in the Old Testament also.

### God reveals His purpose

Scripture expresses the principle that God “revealeth His secret unto His servants the proph-

ets” (Amos 3:7). From the Fall to the call of Abraham little is recorded about God’s dealings with man, but from the time of Abraham there is a more detailed record of the history of God’s people. However, between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus there is a gap, but prophecy filled that gap, for in Genesis 15:13-16 a brief outline of the events which span that period is given. This is a continuous-historic prophecy.

There is a much larger gap in Divine revelation between the Old and New Testaments.