

# 21 What is Prophecy?

The Bible is made up of Prophecy. But what is Prophecy? It is saying what will happen in the future. What is a Prophet? A person who tells the future. In the Bible, God told His prophets what to say.

## The dream of the King of Babylon

To learn more about prophecy, let us look at a dream that the King of Babylon had.

Babylon was a powerful empire in the Middle East about 2600 years ago. The King of Babylon, a man named Nebuchadnezzar, had conquered the land of Israel. God's people (the Jews) had disobeyed God, and to punish them, God let the King of Babylon take over the land of Israel. Many of the Jews were dragged off to Babylon as slaves. Among them was a young man named Daniel. God looked after Daniel, and he became an adviser to the King of Babylon.

One night, the King of Babylon had a dream. It was not an ordinary dream. God caused the king to have the dream, and the King knew it was important. It was a dream that told what would happen from then until now and to beyond now.

## What was the dream?

The King saw an enormous statue of a man. The statue was made of metal. The head was made of gold. The chest and arms were made of silver. The lower part of the body was made of bronze. The legs were made of iron, and the feet were made up of iron and clay.

The King was afraid of the statue. But that was not the end of the dream. From a mountain nearby, the King saw a stone suddenly fly through the air. The stone hit the statue on its feet. The statue then fell over, and the stone began to grind the metals to powder. As the wind blew, the powder was blown away and the statue was gone. The stone then began to grow until the King could see nothing except the stone.

It was a strange dream. The King knew it was an important message. It was a prophecy about the future. But how could the King know what the dream meant?

God explained the dream to His prophet Daniel, who told the King. What did Daniel say to the King? "... there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and God has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days."

You can read the detail of the dream in Daniel 2.

## Interpretation of the dream

The statue showed the kingdoms and empires that would come after Babylon. The head of the statue was made of gold, and this metal stood for Babylon. Then Babylon would pass away, and there would be another Kingdom. This was the silver metal, and this was the Medo-Persian Empire. The next metal was bronze, and this stood for the Greek Empire. The Greeks were led by Alexander the Great.

The next world empire was Rome, and this was the iron legs of the statue. Finally, the feet of the statue were made of iron and clay. Of course, you cannot mix iron and clay, and that is why there have not been any strong world powers since the Roman Empire. There have been men who tried to rule the world. No-one has ever succeeded.

What about the flying stone that smashed into the image? In Daniel 2:44, we are told: "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; ... it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."



So the stone is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He is God's Son who will set up the Kingdom of God on the earth. All the old kingdoms will be done away with, just as the statue was ground to powder and the powder was blown away. This prophecy is important. God will send His Son Jesus back to the earth. Jesus will be King of the World.

### **Other prophecies in the Bible**

Now can you see what prophecy is? God tells His people everywhere what will happen in the future. The prophecy that the King of Babylon was told was a long-range one. The prophecy went from his time until now and even beyond.

### **But can we believe this message?**

Let us look at some other prophecies in the Bible.

We know that God gave a promise to King David, a King of Israel about 3000 years ago. You can read the prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:12. God told David through His prophet Nathan that God would set up a Kingdom from one of David's descendants. The Kingdom that this man would rule over would never end. And the amazing thing about this son of David was that David himself would be made alive again to see it! What a remarkable prophecy! Of course, the son of David that God was telling him about was Jesus Christ.

Two hundred years later, the prophet Isaiah received this prophecy about the coming of Jesus: Isaiah 9:6-7. There were prophecies that came true in the time of Jesus. Many were made hundreds of years before he was born. God had told the prophets that Jesus would be born in the town of Bethlehem. Read the prophecy in Micah 5:2.

Jesus' mother was Mary. The Prophet Isaiah had seen that Jesus would have no human father. Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah also saw that Jesus would be rejected by the Jewish people and suffer a terrible death. Isaiah 53:3-6.

### **The scattering and regathering of the Jews**

In Luke 21:20, Jesus told how Jerusalem would be destroyed soon. About 40 years after the death of Jesus, the Romans conquered the nation of Israel. The Jews were sent away from their land, and they were scattered throughout the world. The Jews suffered great hardships for hundreds of years. Finally, several million of them were killed in Nazi Germany during World War II.

Would the Jews ever go back to their ancient land? People who read the Bible knew that eventually, the Jews would go back to the land of Israel. How did they know? The prophets of Israel said so. There are many prophecies about Israel becoming a nation again. We shall look at one, in the prophecy of Ezekiel. Ezekiel lived in Babylon like Daniel. At that time, the Jews were very sad. Would God let them see their land again? Would they see the city of Jerusalem again?

Ezekiel received a message that, Yes, the Jews would see their land again Ezekiel 37. In a vision, God took Ezekiel to a valley full of dry old bones. God asked Ezekiel if the bones could live again. Ezekiel replied that only God would know that. So Ezekiel was told to speak to the bones so that they would be joined together and be covered with skin. Then he was told to speak to the wind and give the bodies breath. When he did so, the bones came to life. They lived again. Then God told Ezekiel that the bones were just like the people of Israel. All their hope was gone. But God would make the people live again, and they would come back to Jerusalem and be His people again. Even Jesus himself prophesied that this would happen. Jerusalem would be left to others until God decreed that the Jewish people could return.

This has happened. Israel became a nation in 1948, and the Jews took control of the city of Jerusalem in 1967.

### **Conclusion**

The Bible has a lot of prophecy. What matters to all of us is that some of the Bible prophecies have come to pass. We can therefore be sure that the Bible prophecies that have not come to pass, will come to pass soon.