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A SUPERNATURAL MARK ATTESTING THE SCRIPTURES!



HOLY
BIBLE

When we share with others about our sinfulness and the need for a Savior from sin, we are sharing what the Bible teaches. Sometimes people wonder in our modern age why we should even be concerned about the Bible or its worldview. Given all the other sacred texts and religious traditions out there, why turn to or trust the Bible? It's a question that people were asking even in the times of Moses and the prophets!

People often don't realize that the Bible bears an utterly unique supernatural mark, a mark that sets it apart from any other literature in our world. Moses explained to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 18:21-22 what distinguishes God's true revelation: "*You may say to yourself, 'How can we recognize a message the LORD has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the LORD's name, and the message does not come true or is not fulfilled, that is a message the LORD has not spoken*" (CSB). In Isaiah 41:21-23: "*'Submit your case,' says the LORD. 'Present your arguments,' says Jacob's King. 'Let them come and tell us what will happen Tell us the coming events, then we will know that you are gods.'*" In other words, when the

prophet shares a message, any prediction of the future must come true. This is what distinguishes God's Word from any other, whether the Koran, the Hindu sacred texts, or the Book of Mormon. Only God knows the future!

There have always been other, supposed prophets in our world. A popular prophet years ago was Nostradamus. He lived in the sixteenth century, overlapping with the Reformers. He published a book in 1555 with 942 poetic four-line stanzas predicting future events. Nostradamus's wording is typically vague, and so his followers debate among themselves which events he was "predicting." Twentieth century academics, however, were able to demonstrate that one stanza of prophecy allegedly predicting the death of King Henry II of France—a stanza unique in its specificity—never actually appeared in print as part of Nostradamus's works until 1614, fifty-five years after the event had already taken place. The rest of the prophecies are so general in their wording that they can be applied to any number of possible events. That's why Nostradamus's work has proved for many a terrible disappointment.

The biblical authors made prophecies about the future as well, but their prophecies are far more concrete. Certainly the biblical prophets anticipated the coming of the Messiah throughout their writings, but they also made very specific claims about what would take place in the future for the cities and nations of their day. Such claims about what the future holds can be tested! Among the many cities and nations are Tyre, Sidon, Edom, and Samaria—and much is said about each of them. For now, let's focus on each one's eventual (and permanent) fate.

In the case of Tyre, the sixth century BC prophet Ezekiel in his twenty-sixth chapter talks about how waves of nations (and not just Babylon) will come against the city (26:3). It would be destroyed and never rebuilt (26:14, 21), but fishermen would spread their nets over the site (26:5). There is a later city (still) located down the coast from the original Tyre, but the ancient, commanding city is indeed in ruins with a small fishing village located over it. Prior to Nebuchadnezzar's attack on the city in the sixth century BC, Tyre would create a fortification on an island a half mile

from the main city in the Mediterranean as a refuge from the invaders. The island city was then itself conquered in the centuries after the mainland city was destroyed. Alexander the Great first flattened the island in the fourth century BC, and later the Muslims in 1291 demolished it for the centuries to come. The original city on the mainland was never rebuilt.

Sidon, on the other hand, is the opposite case. The prophet Ezekiel (28:20-23) talks about the blood on Sidon's streets with the sword on every side. Tyre ruled the smaller Sidon, and yet Ezekiel never prophesies Sidon's extinction. Three times the city fell to the Crusaders and three times to the Muslims in the Middle Ages, but the city thrives today after one of the bloodiest histories of any ancient town. If one had to pick which of the two cities would endure, surely it would be the greater, more powerful Tyre. Defying natural expectations, Ezekiel instead predicts that Tyre would never be rebuilt, but Sidon would remain—and Ezekiel's predictions proved correct.

Several prophets talk about Edom, with its capital at Petra. Jeremiah (49:17-18) says it will never again be populated. Ezekiel (25:13-14) imagines the land as desolate, and so it is. The Muslims destroyed the land of Edom in AD 636, but only after the Jewish John Hyrcanus in the second century BC forced the last of the original Edomites to be circumcised.

Hosea (13:16) prophesied that Samaria would fall. The prophet Micah (1:6) added that the city would become a heap of ruins, its stones poured down into the valley, with vineyards planted over the bare foundations of the city. Sabaste is the ancient Samaria, and all that remains are gardens, cultivated there for centuries and planted over the ruins. The foundation stones are rolled down in the valley.

What is the likelihood that three of the four cities would become desolate? What is the likelihood that a particular one of the four cities would remain? And this is quite apart from the many other details in these prophecies! Additionally, there are concrete prophecies about other cities and nations. The cumulative case is quite staggering. A scientist, Peter Stoner, did probability calculations to make the incredible point. He estimates the probability for the various prophecies about Tyre at 1 in 75,000,000, Edom at 1 in 10,000, and Samaria at 1 in 40,000.

The Bible bears a unique and demonstrable supernatural mark. When prophets proclaim a humanity steeped in sin and desperately needing to be reconciled with the God who created the universe, faith in that message is well warranted by the evidence. When the prophets predict the rise and fall of cities and nations, history has confirmed the details they foresaw. When the prophets tell us of a coming Savior, who came exactly as they foretold, we realize that we are dealing with a sort of literature unlike anything else in our world. That does not mean people will heed the message. As Abraham told Lazarus in Jesus's parable, a person could come back from the dead and many would still not believe (Luke 16:31). Nevertheless, the Scriptures clearly attest themselves as God's message, and it is good news for the whole world. Indeed, a man did come back from the dead.

- **Presenting evidence** for the truth of Christianity
- **Critiquing worldviews** that oppose Christianity
- **Fortifying believers** with a proper interpretation of Holy Scripture
- **Engaging unbelievers** in conversations leading toward the Gospel proclamation of forgiveness in Christ



Websites:

Center for Apologetics and
Worldview Studies:
blc.edu/apologetics

ELS Evangelism Resources:
els.org/resources/evangelism

Recommended Reading:

Ralph O. Muncaster, *Examine the Evidence: Exploring the Case for Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004).

Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences: A Textbook of the Evidences for the Truthfulness of the Christian Faith for Conservative Protestants* (Chicago: Moody, 1957).

Peter Stoner, *Science Speaks: Scientific Proof of the Accuracy of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1963).