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CAN YOU KNOW RATIONALLY IF THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD?

By Eric V. Snow

It is commonly said Christians who believe the Bible is the inspired word of God are engaging in blind faith, and can't prove God did so. But is this true? By the fact the Bible's prophets have repeatedly predicted the future successfully, we can know beyond reasonable doubt the Bible is not just merely reliable in its history, but is inspired by God. By contrast, compare the reliability of the Bible's prophets to the supermarket tabloids' psychics, who are almost always wrong even about events in the near future.

The prophet Isaiah gave his prophecies in the general period c. 740-700 b.c., long before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king, Nebuchnezzar, in 586 b.c. He predicted the destruction of the city of Babylon (Isa. 13:19-20): "And Babylon, the beauty of the kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation . . ." This vast city had (if we can trust the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, who was probably exaggerating) a 56-mile circumference, 14-mile sides, walls 311 feet high and 87 feet wide, and occupied 196 square miles (including protected farmland within the outer walls). In modern terms, it would be equivalent to predicting the complete destruction and permanent desolation of New York, London, or Tokyo. Additionally, to predict the site wouldn't be rebuilt upon was particularly bold, since this was a common occurrence after a city was destroyed in the ancient Middle East. Yet this prediction was fulfilled! After the ancient Greek geographer and historian Strabo visited the site of the city during the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus (27 b.c.-14 A.D.), he commented: "The great city has become a desert."

The prophet Zephaniah predicted the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of the ancient empire

of Assyria (Zeph. 2:13): "And He (God) will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and He will make Nineveh a desolation." Similarly, the prophet Nahum predicted Nineveh's destruction (Nahum 2:10; 3:19), with the help of a flood (Nahum 2:6), during which many of its people would be drunk (Nahum 1:10), and would be burned as well (Nahum 3:13). Zephaniah was written about 627 b.c., and Nahum somewhere between 661 and 612 b.c. Nineveh, like Babylon, was one of the world's greatest cities, for its inner wall was 100 feet tall and 50 feet thick, complete with a 150-foot-wide moat, and a 7-mile circumference. But these protective features didn't save it. As predicted (Nahum 3:12), the huge city fell easily, after a mere three-month siege, to the forces of the Medes, Scythians, and Babylonians under Nabopolassar in 612 b.c. All of Nahum's specific predictions about how Nineveh would fall were fulfilled, which can't sensibly be seen as mere coincidences.

The prophet Daniel, who wrote during the period 605-536 b.c., predicted the destruction of the Persian empire by Greece. "While I was observing (in a prophetic vision), behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. And he came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. . . . So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power. . . . The ram which you saw with two horns represented the kings of Media and Persia. And the shaggy goat represented the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king" (Daniel 8:5-7, 20-21). More than two hundred years after Daniel's death, Alexander the Great's invasion and conquest of Persia (334-330 b.c.) fulfilled this prophecy.

Likewise, Daniel foresaw the division of Alexander's empire into four parts after his death. "Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. (The large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. And the broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power" (Dan. 8:8, 21-22). This was fulfilled, as Alexander's empire was divided up among four of his generals: 1. Ptolemy (Soter), 2. Seleucus (Nicator), 3. Lysimachus, and 4. Cassander.

Arguments that Daniel was written in the second century b.c. after these events, thus making it only history in disguise, ignore how the style of its vocabulary, syntax, and morphology doesn't fit the second century b.c. As the Old Testament scholar Gleason L. Archer comments ([Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#), p. 283): "Hence these chapters could not have been composed as late as the second century or the third century, but rather--based on purely philological grounds--they have to be dated in the fifth or late sixth century." To insist otherwise is to be guilty of circular reasoning: An anti-theistic a priori (ahead of experience) bias rules out the possibility of God's inspiring the Bible ahead of considering the facts, which then is assumed to "prove" that God didn't inspire the Bible!

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