

Dual Fulfilment of Prophecy

About one-third of the Bible is prophecy. Much of it has more than one fulfilment. Are there any principles which help us in seeing how a prophecy might be fulfilled more than once? Here are three ways in which Bible prophecies can be fulfilled more than once.

A typical fulfilment first

Some Bible prophecies have their complete fulfilment in the long term, but in the short term there is a partial fulfilment in events which are types of the complete fulfilment.

Example. The promises to David are quoted with reference to Solomon; compare:

1 Chronicles 17:12,13 with 22:9,10. This is because Solomon's reign was a type of Christ's Kingdom; compare 1 Kings 4:25 with prophecies of the Kingdom in Jeremiah 23:6 and Micah 4:4. However, their complete fulfilment comes with Christ; see Luke 1:32,33 and Acts 13:33.

Other examples. Micah 4,5 was initially fulfilled by Hezekiah in relation to the Assyrian invasion, but will be more completely fulfilled by Christ setting up the Kingdom. Some features of Psalm 72 were fulfilled by Solomon's kingdom, but the psalm will be completely fulfilled in the future reign of Christ.

A typical fulfilment later

Some Bible prophecies are fulfilled completely initially but this fulfilment is typical of something greater to come.

Example. Isaiah 17 was fulfilled in the Assyrian invasion in Hezekiah's time, culminating in the destruction of the Assyrian host (v. 14). Yet this fulfilment is also typical of the host which invades the land at the time of Christ's return, and is destroyed.

Other examples. Jeremiah 50 and 51 are prophetic of the overthrow of the kingdom of Babylon, but the extensive use of the language of these chapters in Revelation 17 and 18 shows that this overthrow was typical of the overthrow of spiritual Babylon at Christ's return. Psalm 41 (not strictly prophecy) is about David's experiences in the revolt of Absalom, but his betrayal by Ahithophel is typical of Judas's betrayal of Christ (v. 9, quoted in John 13:18).

Prophecies fulfilled on a number of occasions

Some Bible prophecies are fulfilled on several occasions because of situations which keep occurring.

Example. Deuteronomy 28:49 prophesies of "a nation . . . from far" which God would send against Israel if they forsook Him. Note how the terms of this verse were fulfilled by Assyria (Isa. 5:26; 33:19; Hos. 8:1) and Babylon (Jer. 4:13; 5:15) as well as Rome (Mt. 24:28).

Other examples. Cannibalism, prophesied in Leviticus 26:29, is recorded in both 2 Kgs. 6:26-31 and Lamentations 4:10, and according to Josephus occurred in A.D. 70. The opposition to Christ by rulers foretold in Psalm 2:1-3 occurred at his birth (Mt. 2) and his crucifixion (Acts 4:25-28), and will occur at his Second Coming (Rev. 17:12-14) and at the end of the Millennium (20:7-10).

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