

## The Supremacy of the Word – Part 3 Fulfilled Prophecy

This morning I want to continue to talk about the Supremacy of the Word. In week one, I concluded that the Bible is superior because it is always right. We can trust the Bible because the historical record is absolutely reliable.

Last week I shared that the Bible is superior because it touches the heart and soul. It has the power to change lives for good, transform families, and alter the course of entire nations. No other book can do that. There is no other book equal to the Bible.

This morning, I want to present a third look at the Supremacy of the Word.

### **SLIDE 1 - Miami**

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Has anyone been to Miami, FL? Try to imagine the city on a beautiful, sunny day. Beautiful flowers. Wide streets. Palm trees swaying in the wind.

### **SLIDE 2 – Germany**

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Now, imagine the scene of a German city at the conclusion of WW II. If you lived in a city as beautiful as Miami, would you willingly move here ?

That is exactly what the Jews did when they were given permission to return to Jerusalem. They left the beautiful city of Babylon to rebuild the broken down city of Jerusalem.

"Oh, come on, Garth. It wasn't that bad"

Do you want to know how bad it was ?

### SLIDE 3

*Nehemiah 11: 1 Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem, but the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while nine-tenths remained in the other cities. 2 And the people blessed all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem.*

I would love to see Jerusalem. I would love to walk through the streets of Jerusalem. But, when the Jews returned from the Exile, there were no luxury hotels. The people submitted to the luck of the draw. (They cast lots.) Out of every 10 people, if you were one of the 9 lucky winners, you got to live outside the city of Jerusalem in a nearby town. If you were the unlucky one – if you pulled the short straw – you lived inside Jerusalem. What Nebuchadnezzar's army had not destroyed, 70 years of neglect did.

Why would you leave beauty, luxury, wide streets for devastation?

The answer is: the third reason I believe in the Supremacy of the Word of God.... Fulfilled prophecy.

Lesson: Obeying God is not always going to be easy. Obedience can be inconvenient. Obedience can be costly. Obedience can be tiring.

David insisted on purchasing land for an altar because he would not sacrifice to the Lord with something that cost him nothing. The last thing that Elijah (the farmer) did before entering ministry was sacrifice his oxen. The disciples abandoned their nets and their boats. Zacheus promised to repay 4x if he had cheated anyone. Joseph of Aramathea gave up his tomb.

The Bible is superior because it can foretell the future with 100% accuracy. The test of a prophet in the Old Testament was that he could never make a mistake. The words that he spoke from the Lord could never fail. God's prophets were always right. But, there are also prophecies in the New Testament. And every one of them has to come true. Every biblical prophecy has either been fulfilled or will be fulfilled. Every one of them.

Let's consider all the characters in the story:

### I. Jeremiah

#### SLIDE 4

Jeremiah 25:10-12 (NASB)

*10 Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. 11 This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 'Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,' declares the Lord, 'for their iniquity, and the*

*land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.*

## **SLIDE 5**

Jeremiah 29:10-11 (NASB)

*10 "For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.*

Impossible ! The policy of "relocation" used by conquering kings in that day ensured that no one ever returned to their home. A people-group would be moved to a new location where they would feel out of place. They would be surrounded by a new culture, new religion, and new culture. This made the conquered people less likely to revolt.

Little by little, the people would blend in. Children would inter-marry and take spouses of the host country. Over time, the clear distinction of one's race, culture and religion would be watered down. Eventually, the relocated people would melt into the fabric of the new culture and they would no longer exist as a separate people.

It was in this setting that God worked a miracle. According to Jeremiah, they would return.

## **II. Isaiah**

### **SLIDE 6**

Isaiah 44: 24 *Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, "I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone, 25 Causing the omens of boasters to fail, Making fools out of diviners, Causing wise men to draw back And turning their knowledge into foolishness, 26 Confirming the word of His servant And performing the purpose of His messengers. It is I who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise up her ruins again.*

How was God going to accomplish this promise ?

### **SLIDE 7**

Isaiah 44: 27 *"It is I who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make your rivers dry. 28 "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd!' And he will perform all My desire.' And he (Cyrus) declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"*

Do you know what is amazing about this prophecy ? God names King Cyrus of Persia, by name , 150 years before he was born. That would be like you and I naming the president of the USA in 2167, identifying his party, and listing the accomplishments of the administration in the first 100 days in office. You conclude correctly: "That would be impossible". Yet that is exactly what Isaiah did in his prophecy.

**SLIDE 8**

Isaiah 45: *Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: 2 “I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. 3 “I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, So that you (Cyrus) may know that it is I, The Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.*

**III. Daniel****SLIDE 9**

Daniel 9:1 - *In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans—<sup>2</sup> in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.<sup>3</sup> So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.*

**IV. Cyrus of Persia**

Ezra 1: 1-3 *I Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying: 2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 *Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.**

Ezra 6: “Memorandum—<sup>3</sup> *In the first year of King Cyrus, Cyrus the king issued a decree: ‘Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the temple, the place where sacrifices are offered, be rebuilt and let its foundations be retained, its height being 60 cubits and its width 60 cubits; 4 with three layers of huge stones and one layer of timbers. And let the cost be paid from the royal treasury. 5 Also let the gold and silver utensils of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, be returned and brought to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; and you shall put them in the house of God.’*

The return was not easy. Nor was it done quickly

**V. Zerubbabel (Ezra 2)**

( from Bible History Online)

The first move back to Palestine was led by Zerubbabel, of the house of David. He was the only one of royal blood to pay any attention to the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 2). When he returned, he

found just rubble. No temple, torn down walls, and a mixed breed of corrupt Jews (Samaritans) living there.

In 536 BC. he laid the foundations for a new temple, built an altar and worshipped the Lord. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah helped urge the Jews on. They finished the work on the Temple in 516 BC. (exactly 70 years after the Captivity -586 BC).

58 years later (458 BC) more Jews returned (Ezra 7) under the leadership of Ezra.

12 years later, Nehemiah, received permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and to govern Judea. He arrived in 444 BC. Despite much opposition, Nehemiah completed this seemingly hopeless task in 52 days. Then a revival followed. Ezra and Nehemiah canonized the books of the Old Testament. They read aloud to the people and gave interpretation. About 40 years later, the prophet Malachi condemned the people for slipping back into their sinful ways.

## VI. Ezra

Ezra 6: <sup>14</sup> *And the elders of the Jews were successful in building through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.* <sup>15</sup> *This temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.* <sup>16</sup> *And the sons of Israel, the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy.*

The Temple was completed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the last month of the Jewish calendar. What is the first major event to occur once the Temple was completed the task?

Ezra 6: <sup>19</sup> *The exiles observed the Passover on the fourteenth of the first month.*

## VII. Nehemiah

### SLIDE 10

Nehemiah 6:15 – *So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days.*

### SLIDE 11

Nehemiah 8:1-8 <sup>1</sup> *And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.* <sup>2</sup> *Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.* <sup>3</sup> *He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law....* <sup>5</sup> *Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.* <sup>6</sup> *Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their*

*faces to the ground.* <sup>7</sup> Also, *Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place.* <sup>8</sup> *They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.*

Interesting. This is the third time we have seen the celebration of the Passover coincides with an important event in the life of Israel:

#### **SLIDE 12**

- The giving of the Law at Mt Sinai
- The spiritual revival under King Josiah
- The completion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple

If we add the reading of the Law when the restoration of the wall was completed, we see people either reflecting on the past or listening to God's Word at crucial moments in the life of the nation.

When I started preparing this series, I was not in favor of New Year's resolutions. I am still not a fan. But, I wonder, if these examples might make us think about setting aside a time for reflection and re-commitment. I wonder how much different the history of Israel would have been if they had reflected more on who God is and what He had done.

I have little time. I want to bring out one more interesting idea. Did you catch what the Levites did in the last verse ? They translated? Why?

Many of the Jews who returned had been born and raised in Babylon. They did not speak Hebrew. So, someone had to translate so that they could understand what they were hearing. Like, Josiah, for many of them, this was probably the first time that they had heard the Word of the Lord.

I wonder how different their lives would have been if God's Word had been supreme in their lives.

Why does all this matter? I believe the day is coming when the Word of God will not be tolerated in the USA. Previous administrations have not favored Christians. The current administration may be a brief rest before the storm. The political pendulum seems to swing back and forth from one side to the other. Each time it shifts, it appears to swing a little further.

If the political pendulum one day (maybe in the near future) swings far to the extreme of opposition, will we be ready? How do we face a world that is hostile to the Word of God? By firmly believing in the Supremacy of the Word of God.

Do you know what happened 500 years ago in 1517 ? A Catholic monk was serving his congregation. But, inwardly, he was fighting a battle. Martin Luther was tormented by the

concept of “the righteousness of God” in Romans 1. Not matter what he did, he could not reconcile God’s demand for righteousness with his own sinfulness.

(Christian Communicators Worldwide)

He was already a monk, and spent his days in prayer and service. Still, as he looked at his life closely, he found sins in thought, word and deed. In the monastery, Luther spent up to six hours a day confessing his sins to a priest. But later, he would always remember sins he had forgotten to confess. Questions nagged at him. If only confessed sins were forgiven, what would happen if he forgot one? What about all the sins he might have committed in ignorance?

One evening, as he studied in the tower of the Black Cloister in Wittenberg, Germany, the light came on. Luther later wrote....” I greatly longed to understand Paul’s Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expression, “The justice of God”... Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that “the just shall live by faith.” Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. ***Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.***

That was the missing piece, the reason sinful humans could love God—the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This rediscovery led to a wildfire of revival across Europe called “The Reformation.” It changed the world forever.

October 31, 1517 is considered the birth of the Reformation. Few American talk about. Few plan to do anything about. It is a big deal in Spain. Why? Because Spanish believers had to endure the Counter-Reformation. It was brutal.

2 months ago – in La Plaza Mayor in Madrid – the historic center of the city – the place where many trials of the Inquisition were held – where many believers were condemned to die.... Today’s believers took turns reading Scripture publically for 2 ½ hours non-stop.

What inspired the Reformers? “Sola Fide !” “Sola Scriptura !” Latin for “Faith alone – Scripture alone”. Men like William Tyndale (England), John Huss (The Czech Republic), Martin Luther(Germany), Casiodora de Reina and Cipriano Valera (Spain) all believed in the Supremacy of the Word. Some gave their lives. All believed that every Christian should have the Word of God in his or her own language.

Today, missionaries with organizations such as New Tribes and Wycliffe Bible translators carry on the same dream – to make God’s Word available to as many people as possible in as many languages as possible. Why? Because they believe in the Supremacy of the Word.

This is not just a book. I think Pastor Bill said it is - “The Book”.