



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 5.11 – The Doctrine of Providence or Preservation

### God's Use of Prophecy in Proving His Control of Earthly Events

Since God is all-knowing, He knows everything that will happen in the future. Therefore, at any time He chooses, God can foretell or prophesy future events. The prophet Isaiah was given advance information concerning the future of his people. Through him God challenged the false gods to duplicate God's ability to foretell the future and the false gods could not do anything of the kind. We read in Isaiah 41:21-24: **“Present your case,’ says the LORD. ‘Bring forth your strong reasons,’ says the King of Jacob. ‘Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and see it together. Indeed you are nothing, and your work is nothing; he who chooses you is an abomination.”**

God proved that He is the true God. He is the only God, for the things He foretold in times past have all happened as He said, except for things that are still yet to come. One of Isaiah's prophecies foretold the coming of a ruler named Cyrus who would set the Israelites free from their captivity in Babylon at some future time (Isaiah 44:24–45:7). This is such a remarkable prophecy because it is so specific. Many claim that Isaiah could not possibly have known the name of a man who was not yet born, and therefore they say that these words must have been written by a later prophet who wrote after the prophecy had already been fulfilled. But surely it should not be hard for us to believe that the God who created and preserves the world is able give the name of a specific person who would live a hundred years in the future. God declares: **“Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them”** (Isaiah 42:9). **“I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do?”** (Isaiah 44:6-7).

God told His prophet Jeremiah to give a message to the kings of the nations surrounding Israel, informing them of coming events: **“I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me. And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to serve him. So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son, until the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make him serve them”** (Jeremiah 27:5-7). All of this happened as God foretold.

God foretold another series of future events to His prophet Daniel. He told Daniel about future kingdoms of the world and the future of the people of Israel. Since the things that Daniel foretold accurately came to pass several centuries later, many unbelievers say that this so-called prophecy must have been written after the events. But there is no evidence in the Bible or elsewhere that it was not Daniel who wrote the words of this prophecy long in advance of the events that were foretold.

The most wonderful prophecies of the future talk about the coming of the Messiah. God Himself gave the first promise in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). He repeated that promise to Noah and to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob). God generally employed believing members of His family to speak these prophecies (Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel), but in one case He used the heathen prophet Balaam to bless His people and remind them of the coming Messiah: **“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob, a Scepter shall rise out of Israel”**

(Numbers 24:17). Matthew and other New Testament evangelists and apostles point out how these prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus.

Jesus and His apostles also foretold future events. For example, Jesus told His disciples that Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed (Mark 13:1-2). The fact that this prophecy has been fulfilled assures us that everything else Jesus and His apostles foretold will likewise come to pass, including Jesus' return on the Last Day and the great judgment that will follow His return. On the night of His arrest Jesus told His enemies: **"The Scriptures must be fulfilled"** (Mark 14:49).

Sometimes God's prophets were given information that seems quite trivial. For example, the prophet Samuel told Saul: **"As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found"** (1 Samuel 9:20). But such cases helped to establish the authenticity of God's prophets, so that the people would believe them when they proclaimed the future days of the Messiah. God's plans and promises center on Christ and His work of bringing us salvation. This will become clear to all the world, not just to Christians, when Jesus returns as He promised. **"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven"** (Acts 1:11).

### Questions

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1. How did God challenge the false gods in the time of Isaiah?
2. How did God show Himself to be far superior to all idols?
3. Which person did Isaiah mention by name long before he was even born?
4. Why do many Bible students believe that Isaiah could not have written this?
5. Which prophets of God foretold things about future kingdoms?
6. What are some of the promises of the Messiah given in the Old Testament?
7. When did God use even an unbeliever to prophesy about the Messiah?
8. What did Jesus believe about all Scriptural prophecies?
9. What prophecies remain to be fulfilled in the future?
10. Why can we be sure that these prophecies will be fulfilled?
11. How does fulfilled prophecy show that God is in control of all events?