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## The Moral in Prophecy

*“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:19-21*

In the years 1880-84 Alfred Edersheim delivered some lectures in the Chapel of Lincoln’s Inn. These lectures were later published as a book entitled *Prophecy and History* (Longmans, Green, and Company, 1901). The following quote is from Lecture 2 (Reprinted by Baker Book House, 1955, 1980, pp.37-38):

This view of ‘fulfillment’ leads up to another point, on which we must enter more fully. Here also our opponents have rightly apprehended the facts, while they have laid upon us wrongful inferences from them. For these three things follow from the premises previously stated: that prophecy is not predicted history---which, indeed, would be a quite unworthy view of it; that prophecy had always a present meaning and present lessons to those who heard it; and that, as this meaning unfolded in the course of history, it conveyed to each succeeding generation something new, bringing to each fresh present lessons. Nay, even in its final fulfillment each prophecy has lessons to them who have witnessed its accomplishment. In short, prophecy cannot be compressed within the four corners of a fact: it is not merely tidings about the future. It is not dead, but instinct with undying life, and that life is divine. There is a moral aspect in prophecy to all generations. Under one aspect of it, it prepares for the future, and this is the predictive element of it. Under its other aspect it teaches lessons of the present to each generation; and this is its moral aspect.

It is therefore not discordant with our belief in prophecy, but the reverse, when our attention is called to the fact that, as presented in Scripture, the Prophets were not merely---perhaps not even primarily---foretellers of future events, but that their activity also extended to the then present: that they were reprovers, reformers, instructors. Certainly: for they were God’s messengers. But from this it does not follow that the futuristic element had no place in their calling. There is no inconsistency between the two. On the contrary, it was the underlying view of the future which gave meaning and emphasis to their admonitions about the present.

In this passage Edersheim reminds us about the unity of the entire Bible and how it speaks to our present condition. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). The message that Isaiah gave to his generation is one for every generation, including our own: “Wash yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good; Seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isa. 1:16-17). There has never been a generation on earth that didn’t need this kind of teaching.

*“Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Luke 24:44-45*