

Verily we may be able to get a good command of the text from this standpoint. Notice

I. The juncture at which the proclamation was made. "Now in the first year of Cyrus King of Persia." But what was peculiar about that year more than any other year? It marked the close of the seventy years' captivity in Babylon. This proclamation was in fulfilment of prophecy; for Jeremiah had foretold, through the inspiration of God, that at the close of seventy years the captive nation would have an opportunity of returning to their own land. Jeremiah xxix. 10: "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you in causing you to return to this place." Brethren! the prophecies of Scripture are always, and will always be fulfilled. Their fulfilment in the past is a pledge of further fulfilment in the future; and fulfilled prophecy is one of the grandest proofs of the divine origin and infallibility of Scripture. To Abram, long before any heir was born to him, God pointed out for hundreds of years the unerring course of his descendants. To the wandering patriarch, Jehovah indicated that his descendants would be serfs and bondsmen in Egypt; that they would be oppressed and down trodden for a long period of time. Then God told him of the Exodus—the wonderful deliverance from bondage, and the entrance of the chosen people into the goodly land of Canaan. The successive steps of the history of the Israelites, for hundreds of years were marked out in the future, by the finger of prophecy, and in these steps the chosen people infallibly followed. Daniel's prophecy, outlined in a dream, of the successive rise and fall of the four great empires, who in turn controlled the destinies of the world, was literally fulfilled in the history of the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman Powers. Travellers, even infidel inquirers, who have with careful research examined into the ruins and silent desolation of once powerful kingdoms now extinct, whose destruction was foretold in graphic language in the sacred Scriptures thousands of years ago, bear no uncertain testimony to the fulfilment of prophecy. The very triumphs of Christianity, its rapid growth from small beginnings, the spread of the leaven of Christianity amongst the civilization and institutions of nations, its aggressive movements upon the long standing fortresses of dark paganism, the gleam of the gospel torch upon far distant shores, the uplifting and evangelization of the most degraded and barbarous