

U N D E R S T A N D I N G

Bible Prophecy



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By Richard F. Ames

From Genesis to Revelation, more than a quarter of your Bible consists of prophecy. But what is prophecy, and what does it mean for you, for your friends and loved ones, and for the future of our world?

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Preface

From Genesis to Revelation, more than a quarter of your Bible consists of prophecy. But what is prophecy, and what does it mean for you, for your friends and loved ones, and for the future of our world? The answer to this question is not a matter of armchair speculation or only of interest to “religious hobbyists.” Bible prophecy is not some vague and changing idea—it is the Creator God’s revelation to the human beings with whom He is working to carry out His great plan for us and our universe.

Many Bible prophecies have already been fulfilled, and many more remain to *be* fulfilled. In fact, the greatest event in all history is prophesied to come in the very near future! That event will save the world from total destruction. And do not be deceived—the world *needs* saving. Many statesmen, scientists, economists, and think-tank intellectuals speak of apocalypse, Armageddon, and the end of the world. The “Doomsday Clock” of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* is an ongoing reminder of just how close our world remains to a devastating nuclear “midnight” of planetary annihilation.

Even Jesus Christ’s famous Olivet Prophecy in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 affirms the dangers that lie ahead. But unlike the Doomsday Clock, Jesus offers us hope beyond the coming chaos. As He promised, “unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days *will* be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

Those days will be shortened by the return of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. The greatest event in human history may occur in your lifetime—an event that will bring lasting world peace and prosperity! And this is *not* just speculation. Your Bible contains hundreds of prophecies predicting both the first coming and the soon-coming return of the Messiah. Many Bible prophecies have already been

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fulfilled, proving their power and accuracy—as we will see in a later chapter of this booklet.

How important is Bible prophecy? The very Gospel Jesus preached is prophetic. It outlines God’s awesome plan of salvation, your future, and the future of the world. Not only can you know the apocalyptic events about to crash down on the world, but you can know how to escape them. For example, Jesus warned His generation and ours, “‘Therefore when you see the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place’ (whoever reads, let him understand), ‘then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains’” (Matthew 24:15–16). First-century Christians were forewarned and able to escape the destruction and tribulation caused by the Roman armies in 70 AD. But notice the end-time context of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21–22) and the instructions for escaping it: “Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath” (Matthew 24:17–20).

God’s loving revelation to all of us will ensure our life and future—*if* we respond to His instructions. We rejoice at the promise of His coming Kingdom. Thank God for His revelation to human beings called to be His children. As Jesus stated to our Father in Heaven, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes” (Matthew 11:25).

Scripture’s many amazing messages from God’s prophets can be challenging even to Bible scholars. What is symbolized by the great image described by the prophet Daniel? What meaning can we learn from the beasts and the harlot of Revelation—and other mysterious symbols? Proven principles of Bible prophecy will open your understanding to the ultimate future of the world, of humanity, and of the glorious Kingdom to come.

The chapters that follow will open your eyes to the ways God uses prophecy, as well as to some of the most vital aspects of prophecy for us in these years immediately preceding Jesus Christ’s prophesied return. So, read on—and may God help you seek His truth and His revelation. You *can* understand Bible prophecy!

Chapter I

The Purposes of Bible Prophecy

Bible prophecy has been called “history written in advance.” That is true, but it is much more than that. Understanding what Bible prophecy is, and what it foretells, will not only give you sobering and encouraging “news of the future”—it will also help you to more deeply appreciate God’s plan of salvation for you and for all of humanity. Some wrongly try to disconnect prophecy from God’s plan of salvation, but this cannot be done truthfully.

To begin to understand prophecy, let us first consider what prophecy is not. As *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* states, “Prophecy is not intended to open the future to idle curiosity, but for the higher purpose of furnishing light to those whose faith needs confirming.”

Does your faith need confirming? *Unger’s* continues: “The revelation of future events may be needful in times of discouragement to awaken or sustain hope, to inspire confidence in the midst of general backsliding, and to warn of evil threatening the faithful. The predictions against Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, Nineveh, and other kingdoms, were delivered to the people of God to comfort them, by revealing to them the fate of their enemies” (1957, p. 892).

Unger’s defines prophecy very simply: “The oral or written message of a prophet” (p. 893). The Greek word is *prophētēs*, which means “foreteller” or “inspired speaker.” The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* states that the word prophet “was used... to mean ‘one who speaks for a god and interprets his will’ to human beings” (1992, vol. 5, p. 496).

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God's true prophets revealed His will to the people. They also warned the peoples of ancient Israel, as well as the peoples of many other nations. For example, after the death of the priest Jehoiada, the nation of Judah abandoned the true God and worshipped idols: "Therefore they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served wooden images and idols; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass" (2 Chronicles 24:18). How many people today worship modern idols of power, possessions, and position? What action did God take when Judah and Jerusalem committed idolatry? "Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them back to the LORD; and they testified against them, but they would not listen" (2 Chronicles 24:19).

Eventually, God sent the kingdom of Judah into Babylonian captivity for its wickedness. We need to listen to God's warnings to us today! God's word, the Holy Bible, gives us sobering prophecies and warnings that we need to heed. The prophets were God's messengers, giving both instruction and revelation. *Unger's* comments on the role of the prophets:

The predictive element was a frequent part of the content of the prophet's message. But this is not the only element. The prophets frequently appear in the role of social and political reformers, stirring preachers of righteousness and religious revivalists in addition to being predictors of judgment or blessing, as the occasion demanded. The prophet's message was ever religious and spiritual, announcing the will of God to men and calling for complete obedience (p. 893).

So, as we have seen, God sent prophets to help reform nations from their immorality. The prophets also revealed God's plan for the future. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ referred to some of the many prophecies concerning Him: "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 and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Luke 24:44-45). These "Scriptures" were what we now call the Old Testament, which was organized into three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The book of Psalms is the

first book in the Writings. Jesus emphasized the importance of Bible prophecy in foretelling His first coming and His Messiahship. Many Old Testament prophecies also predict His return.

Prophecy is at the foundation of the New Testament Church. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:19–20).

The very foundation of the Church consists of the “apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” Did God inspire these prophets? What does your Bible say? The Apostle Peter had seen prophecy fulfilled—he had seen the resurrected Christ. Peter wrote, “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).

The Creator God inspired His prophets to give us instruction, revelation, and warning. It is important, therefore, to know who is a true prophet and who is falsely claiming that role. Jesus warned us that “many false prophets will rise up and deceive many” (Matthew 24:11). How can you know who God’s true servants are? Scripture gives us the answer: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

If someone today claims to be a prophet, but contradicts the plain words of Scripture—putting his own words above the faith “once for all delivered” (Jude 3)—he is a false prophet. God’s servants preach and teach according to His word, the Bible! That applies to the contents of this booklet and to everything else we at *Tomorrow’s World* preach and teach. Test us. Prove our words in your Bible, and be sure to also test others who say that they teach God’s word.

Four Purposes of Prophecy

John the Baptist moved many by his preaching. But what was his message? “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at

hand!” (Matthew 3:1–2). Jesus Christ soon afterward preached this same message of repentance (see Mark 1:14–15).

How did people respond to John’s preaching of repentance? “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance’” (Matthew 3:5–8).

We must all heed this warning and bear fruits worthy of repentance. Jesus Christ promises protection for those who truly repent and are faithful. The Apostle John records this message Christ delivered to the Church at Philadelphia: “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10).

An hour of trial is coming upon our rebellious and wicked world. Jesus warned us that a Great Tribulation is coming (Matthew 24:21), but God will protect those who listen to His prophetic warnings and change their lives. The book of Jonah shows a rare example of a people actually heeding a warning from God and changing its ways. Will we also repent, nationally and individually? **Our first purpose of Bible prophecy is to warn people to repent before they suffer the dire consequences of their ungodly actions.**

God determined to destroy Nineveh unless its people repented—and they did repent. How did God view their repentance? “Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it” (Jonah 3:10). The prophetic warning resulted in God’s blessing on the people. Will we respond to today’s prophetic warnings as ancient Nineveh did? If we do not, we will experience the severe punishment of the Great Tribulation.

A second purpose of Bible prophecy is that it warns people in captivity to repent. Prophecy reveals that many who do not repent beforehand will remember God’s prophetic warnings and repent during the pain and suffering of the Great Tribulation. God gave this warning—and promise—to those who will in the future suffer national slavery and captivity: “And the LORD will scatter you among the peo-

ples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice (for the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them" (Deuteronomy 4:27-31).

Jesus said that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). Many will hear the Gospel, but they will not respond to it at first. As a result, they will not be able to avoid the Great Tribulation. However, prophecy indicates that many who have heard the true Gospel will repent during that future time of national captivity. If you someday find yourself in that position, please remember God's promise when you are in captivity. He will rescue you. He will deliver you, if you seek Him with all your heart!

A third purpose of Bible prophecy is to announce the coming Kingdom of God on the earth. For nearly 6,000 years, mankind has practiced the way of sin, selfishness, war, and greed. Humanity has not learned the way of peace. Only under the rule of the Prince of Peace—our Savior, Jesus Christ—will people ever enjoy lasting world peace.

Prophecy gives us the encouraging news that Jesus Christ will establish His Kingdom here on earth—and that faithful Christians will rule with Him for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6). Then will come the "Great White Throne Judgment," when all those who lived and died without hearing God's truth will be resurrected and given their first actual opportunity to accept His message and live His way. (For more on this topic, please request our free booklet *Is This the Only Day of Salvation?*)

You can read some of the millennial prophecies in Isaiah 2, 11, and 35, as well as in Micah 4. These are inspiring prophecies that give us real hope.

Alfred Edersheim's *Prophecy and History in Relation to the Messiah* observes, "The one pervading and impelling idea of the Old Tes-

tament is the royal reign of God on earth.... This Messianic idea is the moving spring of the Old Testament. It is also its sole *raison d'être*, viewed as revelation" (1885, pp. 48, 135). Jesus Christ will return as King of kings and Lord of lords, as Revelation 19:16 states. The "royal reign of God on earth" will bring world peace and prosperity.

Government without God has only brought suffering. Unless God intervenes, it will bring mankind to utter destruction. As Jesus said, "unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22). The Bible prophesies that there will be a time of restoration for the earth. Remember Peter's words, that God will "send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20-21). God will restore the earth to natural, unpolluted beauty and prosperity under the divine government and Kingdom of God. We can all rejoice at that good news.

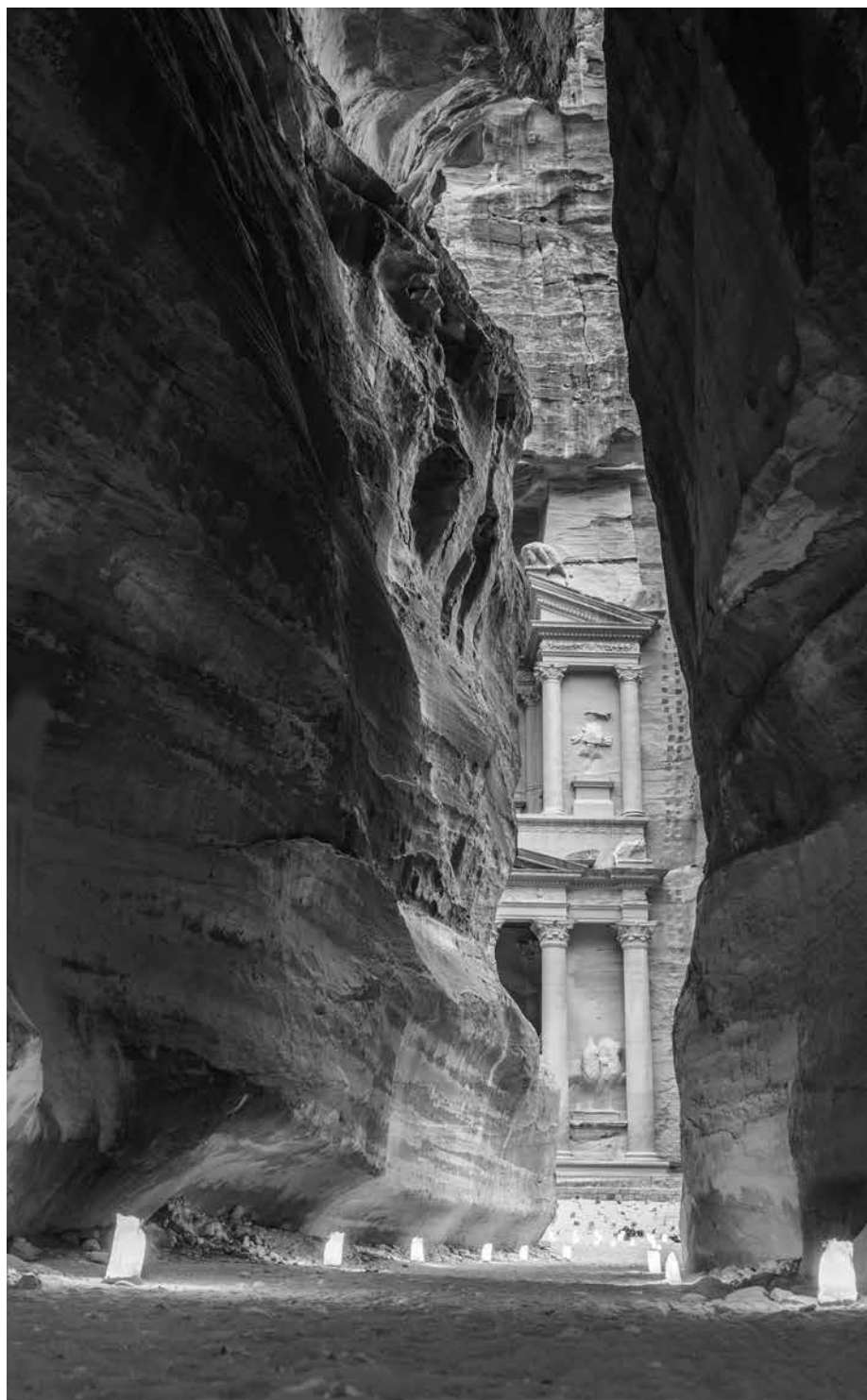
A fourth purpose of Bible prophecy is that it demonstrates God's total sovereignty and power. Nothing can deter God's plan of salvation. That plan is revealed in your Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. God has an awesome purpose for every human being who will respond to Him. That purpose is to become a glorious, immortalized child of God for all eternity. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53). God's great power, through His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ, will bring this to pass.

Almighty God declares His power and sovereignty: "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it" (Isaiah 46:9-11). God Almighty will powerfully fulfill His purpose and prophecy.

The prophet Amos warns us that a time will come when the truth that you are now reading will not be available: "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord GOD, 'that I will send a famine on the land, not

a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it” (Amos 8:11–12).

Jesus Christ promises a great benefit to those who seek Him with a sincere desire to understand. “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near” (Revelation 1:3). You can receive such a blessing as you sincerely study God’s word and understand its many prophecies. A wonderful future awaits, beyond your brightest hopes and dreams!



Chapter 2

Can You Rely on Bible Prophecy?

Most people who call themselves Christians understand that the first Christians had as their scriptures only what we know today as the Old Testament. They know that people in the days of Jesus of Nazareth were familiar with those scriptures—and that they understood from them that He was the prophesied Messiah.

But not so many know about the hundreds of amazing prophecies found throughout your Bible. Depending on exactly how you count, somewhere between a fourth and a third of your Bible is, in fact, prophetic. According to J. Barton Payne's *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, your Bible contains 1,817 predictions about the future. Those prophecies not only foretell the coming of Jesus Christ—they also explain much about the rise and fall of nations, as well as the end-time disasters and plagues that would end all human life if Jesus Christ were not prophesied to return and establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

In this chapter, we will consider just a few amazing examples—and what they mean for your faith and your future.

The Messiah Foretold

One of the most amazing examples of fulfilled Bible prophecy regards the number of specific mentions of the prophesied Messiah. The Old Testament contains more than 300 references to His coming. What are the odds of 300 prophecies all being fulfilled? In his book *Science*

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Speaks, the late mathematician Peter Stoner (1888–1980) examined the probability of one person fulfilling just 48 of those prophecies. The chance of that happening would be one in 10^{157} . To put that in perspective, that would be like trying to find, on the first attempt, one specific electron out of all the electrons in all the known universe—and that’s considering just 48 of the 300 prophecies (1976, pp. 109–111).

Some skeptics attempt to reason around this with ideas that try to diminish the inspiration of the Bible or treat the first Christians as fools. If you do not already appreciate the astonishing consistency and historical veracity of Scripture, read our informative booklet *The Bible: Fact or Fiction?* You’ll be encouraged by what you learn.

Let’s look very specifically at a few of the best-known Messianic prophecies and their fulfillment. *Halley’s Bible Handbook* gives us a helpful list, including:

That He would be Born of a Virgin (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14).

That He would be Born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:6; John 7:42; Micah 5:2).

That He would Sojourn in Egypt (Matthew 2:15; Hosea 11:1).

That He would Live in Galilee (Matthew 4:15; Isaiah 9:1, 2).

That His Coming would be Announced by an Elijah-like Herald (Matthew 3:3; 11:10–14; Mark 1:2–3; Luke 3:4–6; 7:27; John 1:23; Isaiah 40:3–5; Malachi 3:1; 4:5)....

That His Ministry would be one of Healing (Matthew 8:17; Isaiah 53:4)....

Betrayed by a Friend for 30 Pieces of Silver (Matthew 27:9–10; John 13:18; Zechariah 11:12–13; Psalm 41:9)....

His Side would be Pierced (John 19:37; Zechariah 12:10; Psalm 22:16) (1965, pp. 421–422).

These are just a few of the many prophecies fulfilled regarding Jesus’ Messiahship. Another very important prophecy involves the timing of His coming. The Jews of Jesus’ day were aware of the prophet Daniel’s vital prophecy foretelling the Messiah’s appearance: “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconcil-

iation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy” (Daniel 9:24).

Notice that this prophesied figure was to make reconciliation for iniquity! Many scriptures showed that the Messiah would die for the sins of the world so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God. John the Baptist testified, referring to Jesus, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Regarding Christ, the Apostle Paul wrote, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

Daniel’s prophecy reminds us that one of the major purposes of the Messiah’s coming was to make this reconciliation for iniquity. Each of us can be forgiven for our sins through the blood of Christ, if we do as Jesus commanded: “Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Later, the Apostle Peter preached to a crowd on the day of Pentecost, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Have you repented? Do you believe in the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God?

But there is much more to Daniel’s prophecy. In prophetic terminology, a “day” often symbolizes a year in fulfillment (cf. Numbers 14:34; Isaiah 63:4; Ezekiel 4:6). Daniel’s prophecy states that there are 69 weeks leading up to the Messiah, each consisting of seven days—483 prophetic years. “Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks” (Daniel 9:25).

So, if we know when the prophecy’s timeline began, we can know when Christ would begin His work of reconciliation! Interestingly, many scholars believe that “the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem” refers to the decree of Artaxerxes, which historians place at 457 BC. What year is 483 years later? Since the year 1 BC is immediately followed by the year AD 1, we see that according to Daniel’s prophecy, the Messiah’s ministry was to begin in AD 27.

Luke’s gospel tells us that, just after John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, “Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:23). So, when was Jesus born? Sure enough, if we subtract 30 years of age from 27 AD, we come to 4 BC—when most

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Bible scholars believe Jesus was born. Jesus Christ fulfilled Daniel's prophecy, to the exact year, beginning His ministry of reconciliation for iniquity in 27 AD!

Of course, there are other aspects of Daniel's prophecy for Christ to complete when He returns. Daniel describes three more missions that are still in the future. When He returns, the Messiah will fulfill prophecies "to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy" (Daniel 9:24).

Note that "the Most Holy" here refers to the temple in Jerusalem, which will be established and active during the coming Millennium (cf. Ezekiel 40–43), as you can see in English-language Bible translations that read the "Most Holy Place," such as the *Modern English Version* and *English Standard Version*.

A Kingdom's Fall Foretold

We should not be surprised that Almighty God can give us prophecies centuries and even millennia before their fulfillment. Through the prophet Isaiah, He declares, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:9–10).

One fascinating but less-known example of prophecy being fulfilled concerns the fall of ancient Babylon. At the time God revealed this prophecy, Babylon was the greatest empire in the world. Human logic would not have predicted its demise. Yet Bible prophecy foretold that this great power would punish other nations as a tool of God's judgment—and then would itself be judged for its own sin.

Imagine someone during World War I declaring that Tony Blair or Rishi Sunak would become Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Impossible? Well, more than a hundred years before the overthrow of the great Babylonian empire, the prophet Isaiah named the man who would be responsible for Babylon's fall. God said "of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," and to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid"' (Isaiah 44:28). Cyrus was king over the Persians from about 558 BC to 529 BC. So, Isaiah was prophesying in the eighth century BC about a king who wasn't even born until the sixth century BC!

Cyrus was instrumental in allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and build the second temple. Not only did Isaiah foretell Cyrus by name—he also foretold just how Cyrus would enter Babylon to conquer it. Long before it happened, God proclaimed that He would use Cyrus in a special way: “Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: ‘I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel’” (Isaiah 45:1–3). The reference to the “double doors” tells how God enabled Cyrus’ army to capture the city.

The city of Babylon seemed impregnable with its massive walls and defenses. And the city had supplies that could outlast a 20-year siege—so the Babylonians just laughed at Cyrus’ army when it came to attack the city.

The river Euphrates passed through the middle of Babylon under massive gates in its wall. It supplied water for the city. Cyrus used an ingenious method to enter the city; some of his men dug channels upstream to divert the flow of the river.

More than 100 years before his birth, your Bible prophesied by his very name that Cyrus the Great would overcome the great fortress of Babylon. The secular Greek historian Herodotus also wrote of this event:

[Cyrus and his non-combatant troops] so greatly reduced the depth of water in the actual bed of the river that it became fordable, and the Persian army, which had been left at Babylon for the purpose, entered the river, now only deep enough to reach about the middle of a man’s thigh, and, making their way along it, got into the town.... The Babylonians themselves say that owing to the great size of the city the outskirts were captured without the people in the centre knowing anything about it; there was a festival going on, and they continued to dance and enjoy themselves, until they learned the news the hard way. That, then, is the story of the first capture of Babylon (*The Histories*, translated by Aubrey de Sélincourt, book 1, chapters 191–192).

The secular historian Herodotus confirms, as do other sources such as Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, that Bible prophecy was dramatically and accurately fulfilled! The prophet Daniel was actually in the city of Babylon on the night the Persian army of Cyrus conquered it, and we can read of these events in the book of Daniel.

And, through this prophet, God also let King Belshazzar know what would happen to him and the empire. That's the famous story of the handwriting on the wall. King Belshazzar had prepared a feast, a great party, for thousands of his nobles. They drank wine out of the plundered golden vessels from the temple in Jerusalem. "In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other" (Daniel 5:5-6).

Daniel was called upon to interpret this inscription. "And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN" (Daniel 5:25). Daniel then told King Belshazzar, "This is the interpretation of each word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; PERES [the singular form of *upharsin*]: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (vv. 26-28). "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old" (vv. 30-31). The kingdom of the Medes and Persians replaced the kingdom of Babylon, just as God had foretold.

God's word, the Bible, has shown itself true. It continues to do so, and will continue to do so to the prophesied end of this present age and beyond!

Chapter 3

Is the Gospel Prophetic?

Some who call themselves Christians express their opposition to what we at *Tomorrow's World* are teaching. They say that preaching Bible prophecy is irrelevant—or actually contrary—to preaching the “Gospel message.” According to them, though Bible prophecy may be an interesting topic, it is not significant to our salvation. Is this true? Many professing Christians believe that the Gospel is only about the person of Christ, and they ignore what He preached. But what exactly did Jesus preach? Did His message oppose Bible prophecy? Or could it be that the Gospel itself is prophetic?

Scripture describes Jesus preaching in Galilee: “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23). Jesus continued to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom: “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people” (9:35).

So, we see the clear historic record of the message Jesus preached—that of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Scripture further explains, “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14–15).

What is this Gospel of the Kingdom of God? Many biblical references and prophecies show that Jesus Christ will come again to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. He said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). The Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will return to this earth to rule all nations as Prince of Peace, and as King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. Revelation 11:15).

The Gospel of the Kingdom is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, and of how we can have a part in that Kingdom. The Gospel that Jesus preached is prophetic! His message is the good news of the future—so the charge that preaching Bible prophecy is contrary or irrelevant to the Gospel is a false one.

Salvation from death is a gift that God’s people will ultimately receive at the resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Thessalonians 4). The book of Revelation describes our ultimate destiny in the Kingdom and Family of God for all eternity. The heavenly Jerusalem—the New Jerusalem—will descend to a renewed earth (Revelation 21). You and I can be a part of that glorious future! The great Creator God tells us, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (v. 7).

We can all be thankful that the living Jesus Christ has been guiding His servants to preach the true Gospel. As Jesus said, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). Thank God for the true Gospel of salvation—and for the coming Kingdom of God that He prophesied!

Some do not recognize that there will be a future Kingdom of God. They miss the significance of Paul’s reminder that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50). If you are a flesh-and-blood Christian, you are preparing to inherit the Kingdom, but you have not yet inherited the Kingdom! You will receive your full inheritance at the time of the resurrection (John 3:5–6).

Jesus Himself emphasized that this inheritance will take place at the end of this age: “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 25:34).

Most of us wonder what will happen in the years ahead. Will meteors destroy the earth? Will World War III cause the end of the world? The Bible gives the answers to those questions. We have shown that many ancient prophecies have been fulfilled, exactly as predicted in your Bible. Can we know what God has predicted for the future ahead of us? Yes, we can!

Bible prophecy also warns people and nations to repent so they can avoid prophesied punishment. John the Baptist was baptizing massive crowds of people who were moved by his preaching. The Gospel writer Matthew describes, “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’” (Matthew 3:1–2). Jesus Christ, of course, later preached that same message (Mark 1:14–15). What was the response to John’s preaching? “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matthew 3:5–6).

Are you preparing for the return of Christ? Understanding the reality of Bible prophecy will help you prepare! On the day of Pentecost in 31 AD, the Apostle Peter exhorted the thousands in his audience to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Peter motivated the crowd to change their lives. He said, “‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:40–41).

The Bible clearly outlines the judgment that will come upon the Western nations if they persist in their immoral, anti-God lifestyles. But if you understand Bible prophecy and act on what you come to understand, you can be spared great suffering and can experience God’s blessings individually, even if your nation undergoes God’s judgment. Prophecy reveals sobering end-time events just ahead, but it also reveals the good news of God’s soon-coming Kingdom. God speed that wonderful day!

Preaching of the Gospel: Prophesied

Jesus gave this sign of the end of the age, the end of mankind’s failed attempts to produce world peace: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). The Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will be King over all nations. We read that “the LORD shall

be King over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:9). Today’s world of conflicts, oppression, and wars will be replaced by the Kingdom of God, the government of God. This very booklet is preaching that powerful message.

Scripture proclaims the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’” (Revelation 11:15).

It’s at the “last trumpet,” the seventh trumpet, that the great resurrection of genuine Christians takes place, “for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’” (1 Corinthians 15:52–54).

True Christians who are faithful will be transformed from mortal to immortal, from physical beings to divine spirit beings at the resurrection when Christ returns (1 Corinthians 15:50–54). Faithful Christians are now being trained as future kings and priests and they will assist the King of kings in ruling planet Earth. “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth’” (Revelation 5:9–10).

What will be their responsibilities? Jesus stated in the Parable of the Minas that faithful servants would be ruling over cities. “And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities’” (Luke 19:17).

Your Bible reveals an awesome future, the coming Kingdom of God to this earth. It reveals the government and rulers that will bring peace to all nations: “And the LORD shall be King over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:9).

Today’s world is experiencing dramatic challenges. Only God’s worldwide government can solve our planet’s conflicts, wars, disease, poverty, and natural disasters. Your Bible reveals the new world to

come, tomorrow's world—governed by loving spirit beings, members of the coming Kingdom of God. The King of kings, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will rule the world from Jerusalem. A prophecy in the book of Isaiah concerns the response of human beings to the new divine government:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:2-4).

God is calling people to Christ from *all nations* to be in His Kingdom. That worldwide government is coming soon. You need to prepare for it. Study your Bible. Visualize the transformed world under the King of kings. Spirit beings will rule the world in the coming Kingdom of God, and you can be one of those spirit beings *if* you seek that Kingdom (Matthew 6:33) and *if* you surrender your life to the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

God has blessed the earth with awesome, majestic mountains, fertile valleys, and productive plains. We marvel at pristine lakes and churning oceans. We appreciate the variety of flowers, plant life, birds, animals, and sea life. The glorious Kingdom of God, ruling on earth, will produce beauty and productivity the world has never known. Even the very nature of animals will change. Isaiah gives us this inspiring description of the prophesied Millennium:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together;

End-Time Prophetic

The Abomination of Desolation

MATTHEW 24:15

Therefore when you see the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place...

MATTHEW 24:21

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever...

The Great Tribulation begins

3 1/2 years

GREAT TRIBULATION

2 1/2 years

Jerusalem Trodden Down

Revelation 11:2 42 months = 3 1/2 years

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:3 1,260 days = 3 1/2 years

Beast Given Authority

Revelation 13:5 42 months = 3 1/2 years

Portion of Church in the Wilderness

Revelation 12:14-17 Time, times, half a time = 3 1/2 years

End of Jewish Sacrifices

Daniel 12:11

The Abomination of Desolation

Daniel 12:11

1,260 days

1,290 days

PRE-TRIB



30 days

Milestones

Heavenly Signs begin

MATTHEW 24:29

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Jesus Christ returns

MATTHEW 24:30-31

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

DAY OF THE LORD

1 year

The Seven Trumpets

Revelation 8:7-12, 9:1-21, 11:15-19

- Vegetation struck
- Seas struck
- Waters struck
- Heavens struck
- Locusts from bottomless pit
- Angels from the Euphrates
- The Kingdom proclaimed

Isaiah 34:8 *Year of recompense*

MILLENNIUM ▶

The First Resurrection

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17
Revelation 20:4-5

Seven Last Plagues

Revelation 16:1-20

Marriage of the Lamb

Revelation 19:6-9

Charge of the Heavenly Armies

Revelation 19:11-21

Satan and Demons Bound

Revelation 20:1-3

and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:6–9).

The Gospel that Jesus Christ preached is indeed prophetic! He foretold the coming to earth of a glorious age of peace and prosperity for all people—and that age is coming soon. We should all be praying, “Your Kingdom come,” and we need to be watching the prophetic trends and signs heralding Christ's return.

Chapter 4

Keys to Understanding

People have always wanted to know the future, and they will often seek just about every possible source of information except the Bible. Many newspapers publish a horoscope, the idea of which is that your birth date somehow determines your characteristics and what will happen to you at certain times of the year, which is supposedly revealed by the position of constellations in the heavens.

Others pay mediums to read a crystal ball and sometimes try to communicate with the dead. Others read tarot cards for prophetic interpretations. Millions of people look to séances, channeling, and astrology for power and insight. They dabble in the occult and seek answers from soothsayers and mystics. They even fellowship with witches, mediums, and sorcerers. Will any of these reveal God's will for you? Of course not! God calls these practices an abomination (Deuteronomy 18), and tells us that Satan the devil has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). Obviously, that could include you and me—but God can help us see through the devices and deceptions of the devil.

Bible prophecy reveals the sequence of events in the dangerous times ahead. Your Bible shows that Armageddon and World War III lie on the horizon. The world faces terrorism, major famines, pestilence, and severe natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions. With war, sickness, suffering, and pain all around us, many people are tempted to lose hope. But

did you know that Bible prophecy reveals vital truths about the future of the world—and your own destiny? Beyond a soon-coming time of great tribulation lies a future time of world peace under the Kingdom of God. Your Bible reveals that the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, will return to teach all nations the way to peace. Under Christ’s loving rule in the prophesied time we call the Millennium, the world will prosper with clean air, clean water, and sustainable agriculture.

We are living in the prophetic period of time that your Bible identifies as the end-time. When you come to understand the prophecies in your Bible, you will see that these are exciting times—leading up to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom on the earth!

Bible prophecy is exciting to many, but some Bible prophecies may seem hard to understand. The books of Daniel and Revelation feature various symbols and imagery. When ancient King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon dreamed of a mysterious statue made of different metals and clay, the prophet Daniel interpreted the dream’s meaning (Daniel 2:1–45). The famous four horsemen of the apocalypse symbolize devastation and deception (Revelation 6:1–8). The beast of Revelation 13, rising up out of the sea, has seven heads and ten horns. The beast of Revelation 17, which rises out of a bottomless pit, also has seven heads and ten horns—but that beast is ridden by a harlot. The Apostle John writes what he sees in vision: “And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Revelation 17:5).

How can we understand these mysterious symbols, and the many intricacies of Bible prophecy? In this chapter we will briefly consider four principles for understanding the prophecies in your Bible.

Let Scripture Interpret Scripture

Where should you turn to learn the truth? Jesus, in His heartfelt prayer the night before He was crucified, prayed for His disciples, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). God’s word, the Bible, is truth. It is the written word of God. If you want to understand the future God has planned for you and all humanity, you need to go to the Bible, not to soothsayers and mediums.

The book of Revelation contains symbolic language, giving a description of the glorified Messiah, the Son of Man, standing in the midst of seven lampstands. “He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength” (Revelation 1:16). What do these stars and lampstands symbolize?

We do not need to guess; the Bible itself tells us the meaning! “The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you see are the seven churches” (v. 20). The next two chapters of the book of Revelation contain God’s message and admonition to seven churches in Asia Minor—modern-day Turkey. Of course, the Apostle John was writing this book near the end of the first century AD.

You may be familiar with the account of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. The prophet Daniel was called before King Nebuchadnezzar, where he proceeded to describe the great image in the king’s dream.

You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces (Daniel 2:31–34).

What did this statue symbolize? Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “You are this head of gold” (v. 38). History confirms Daniel’s interpretation of the subsequent empires symbolized by the statue. The Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar was later replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire (558–330 BC), represented by the chest and arms of silver. The belly and thighs of bronze represented the Greco-Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great (333–31 BC). The two legs of iron represent the Roman Empire (31 BC–476 AD). Finally, the ten toes on two feet of iron mixed with ceramic clay represent a future revival of the Roman Empire. History now confirms that Daniel’s prophecy of four world-ruling empires did indeed come to pass.

Understand Prophetic Time Gaps

The Gospel of Luke records what happened when Jesus was visiting His hometown of Nazareth and was invited to read from the Scriptures on the Sabbath:

And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:17–21).

Jesus closed the book right in the middle of a verse. He was reading Isaiah 61, but omitted the second part of verse 2—which refers to the day of vengeance—and didn’t read further. Why? Because the remainder of Isaiah’s prophecy applies to Jesus’ Second Coming, when the day of God’s vengeance and wrath takes place. There is a time gap of about 2,000 years between the fulfillment of the first part of the verse and the fulfillment of the second.

Another aspect of prophetic time gaps is the principle of “duality.” Often in the Bible we find a former fulfillment of a prophecy and a later, more climactic fulfillment of the same prophecy.

The principle of duality is found throughout the Bible. For example, “‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45). Who was the last Adam?

Scripture gives us the answer: “The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven” (v. 47). Yes, the second Adam was Jesus Christ.

Prophecy is often dual—and we ought to learn the lessons of history. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in 70 AD was just a foreshadowing of the great tribulation that lies ahead.

Recognize Modern Nations in Scripture

Where is the United States mentioned in the Bible? Or under what name can we locate it? Where can we find Great Britain in the Bible? Obviously, the modern names do not appear, but the ancestors of these nations are prominently named in the Bible. If you haven't already, read our informative booklet *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy* to learn more about the historic connection between ancient Israelite tribes and these modern nations.

The Bible does mention such nations as Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia—and it may surprise you that Assyria will eventually be one of the prominent nations in the Millennium, along with Egypt and Israel (Isaiah 19:23–25). But which nation today is Assyria? You may be surprised to learn that history and Bible prophecy point to the modern nation of Germany as the descendant of that ancient people. To learn more, read our eye-opening booklet *Germany in Prophecy*.

Know God's Prophetic Framework

There are many different ideas and scenarios regarding Bible prophecy. You may have heard of postmillennialism, which claims that Jesus Christ will return *after* the prophesied Millennium, or amillennialism, which claims that He will not return at all. The true, biblical scenario is what Bible scholars call *premillennialism*—that Christ will return to set up a literal Kingdom on earth for a literal period of a thousand years.

The book of Revelation describes a period of three-and-a-half years leading up to Christ's return. The first five seals of Revelation, outlined in Revelation 6, cover a period of two-and-a-half years—the Great Tribulation of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24.

The whole world will be put on notice by the event of the Heavenly Signs. The Apostle John writes, "I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place" (Revelation 6:12–14).

The world will then realize that the time of God's judgment has come! The Heavenly Signs introduce the one-year period known

as the Day of the Lord. This famous time is mentioned in about 30 prophecies of your Bible. The Day of the Lord in end-time prophecy, immediately preceding Christ's return, is a period of one year (Isaiah 34:8; 63:4) following the Great Tribulation and the Heavenly Signs.

This is the year of God's punishment on the nations, and it culminates with the announcement of Christ's return and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. That is the exciting good news of prophecy! "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" (Revelation 11:15).

We should all look forward to the return of Christ, and we need to be spiritually preparing for that soon-coming event. As you can see, the Bible gives us an overall framework for prophecy. Understanding that framework can help us avoid futile speculations and can help us grow deeper in our appreciation of what God has done and is doing.

Chapter 5

Jerusalem, Old and New

Bible prophecy reveals that of all the world's cities, one stands out with a very special role. Notice this prophecy concerning the future of Jerusalem: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it" (Isaiah 2:1-2).

Mountains are a biblical symbol for a kingdom or government. Isaiah stated plainly that God's Kingdom would be established in Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be the capital of the world! Notice that "all nations shall flow to it." All nations will submit to the new world government.

Understand that this will not be government in the hands of selfish human beings. The new government will be a world-ruling divine Kingdom, the Kingdom of God. This world-ruling Kingdom will be ruled by the Prince of Peace and King of kings, Jesus Christ. That's the good news we all look forward to. I hope that you're looking forward to that time of world peace, yearning for the Kingdom to come, and praying, "Your Kingdom come," as we're taught to pray in Matthew 6:10!

Modern Conflict over Jerusalem

When the Prince of Peace returns, Jerusalem will become His capital—the center of world government, religion, and education. The very name *Jerusalem* means "City of Peace." But that name does not

reflect today's reality in that troubled capital. In fact, most modern nations do not even recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital because of ongoing disputes with Palestinians who also claim the city as their capital. There was worldwide controversy when, in 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that the United States would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital city. Australia followed suit for a while, but in November 2022 reversed its decision and returned to its prior position that views Tel Aviv as the Israeli capital.

For years, Jerusalem's importance to three major world religions has made its administration a focus of international controversy. Although Israel has controlled both East and West Jerusalem since 1967, many other governments want to see Jerusalem administered internationally. The original 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181) proposed that Jerusalem be treated as a *corpus separatum*—an internationally administered zone—and although this status never took effect, many still hope for something similar to be achieved.

The Bible reveals that a shocking turn of events will occur, through which Jerusalem will be controlled not by Israel, but another government. The Apostle John wrote, "Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, 'Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city under foot for forty-two months'" (Revelation 11:1-2).

Jerusalem ("the holy city") will be controlled by the Gentiles for 42 months before Jesus Christ returns! A great world power, described as a "beast" in the book of Revelation, will invade the Middle East and take control of Jerusalem for the three-and-a-half years preceding the return of Jesus Christ. During that time, two prophets of God will be witnessing with great power and will contend against the Gentile force that will then be dominating the Middle East (Revelation 11:3-14).

Since the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel has fought wars and negotiated peace treaties with several Arab states. But Israel has never been able to negotiate a permanent peace agreement with Palestinians. If both sides consider their positions non-negotiable, there's an impasse. The Israeli position remains unchanged—that is, they insist that Jerusalem will remain united under sole Israeli sovereignty. We

can be sure that the status of Jerusalem will continue to be a major issue in geopolitics. You need to be watching the Middle East—and the trends that will mean major changes in political and religious control over the city of Jerusalem.

Trodden Down by Gentiles

Jesus spoke of a time when enemy armies will invade the Holy Land and surround the city of Jerusalem. “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20). So, we see that there are at least two signs Jesus tells us to watch for: the Abomination of Desolation and Jerusalem surrounded by armies. These will not just be any armies of the Middle East, but the Gentile armies that will control Jerusalem for three-and-a-half years, as we read in Revelation 11:2.

Now, let’s continue: “For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:22–24). As you read through the book of Revelation, you’ll see that this period of three-and-a-half years immediately precedes the return of Christ.

Daniel had been given a revelation, a vision by an angel. When he asked the meaning of the message, the angel told him, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Daniel 12:9). More than 2,500 years later, we can now understand these prophecies—this is the time of the end!

Daily Sacrifices Restored and Ended

There is one vital end-time detail that many fail to notice: “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days” (Daniel 12:11). God reveals that at the time of the end, shortly before the return of Christ, the daily sacrifice will be stopped or “taken away.” Obviously, the sacrifices must be started before they can be stopped! The Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and the second temple in 70 AD, and the Jews have not offered temple sacrifices since that time.

But in ancient times, when they returned to Jerusalem from exile, the Jews actually began sacrificing even before the foundation of their temple was laid. The Jews also observed the Feast of Tabernacles with daily sacrifices (Ezra 3:4). “From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid” (v. 6). Ezra referred to the site of the holy place as “the House of God,” even though the temple had not yet been built (Ezra 3:8). This was around 536 BC, but there was no building as yet. The following verses describe the laying of the foundation of the temple.

The point is that sacrifices must be presented in a holy place—but this example in Ezra shows us that sacrifices were made daily *without* a physical building called a temple. The returning Jewish exiles referred to the Holy Place as “the House of God,” even though no temple existed. In recent years, Jews have been pressuring for a religious presence on the Temple Mount. The holiest place currently under the control of the Jewish religious authorities is the Western Wall, also known as the Wailing Wall. It is the western retaining wall to the Temple Mount. Jews are not allowed to publicly worship on the Temple Mount—only Muslims.

Educational and Governmental Capital

The great Educator and Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ, will come from Heaven with all the resurrected saints to rule the earth for a thousand years of peace and prosperity. Jerusalem will be His capital, the capital of the world.

And it will be not only the governmental capital of the world, but also the educational capital of the world—Christ will teach true knowledge based on the word of God.

Thus says the LORD: “I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain.” Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets” (Zechariah 8:3–5).

A Thousand Years of Peace

During the Millennium, the thousand years after Christ returns to reign on the earth as King of kings, all nations on earth will look to Jerusalem as the capital of the world and will send representatives to worship Him. “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16).

All nations will finally learn the way to peace, not war, and they will learn the true way of love toward God and love toward neighbor. Nations will no longer desire military power and war to solve problems. They will want the truth taught to them from the capital city, Jerusalem.

Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD *from Jerusalem*. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:3–4).

The city of Jerusalem will finally live up to its name, “City of Peace,” because the Eternal, Jesus Christ, will personally dwell there. As He said, “I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.” That’s when we’ll begin to experience genuine world peace. As Isaiah said, the people will come to the Holy Land and say, “‘He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”

The New Jerusalem—and You

The future of Jerusalem is also the good news of your future—and the future of the world. Eventually, the New Jerusalem will come down from heaven to this earth as capital of the universe, more glorious than any humanly designed capital. You can read about that magnificent time in Revelation 21–22. In the meantime, we look forward to

Understanding Bible Prophecy

the soon-coming center of world government, education, and religion, the capital city called Jerusalem.

The “city of peace” has experienced vicious wars and loss of life over the centuries, but it will soon achieve peace. Bible prophecy tells us so.

Chapter 6

End-Time Prophecies Ahead

Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, is also called the “Prince of peace” (Isaiah 9:6). Our world desperately needs the peace only Christ can bring. But will you be ready to meet Him when He comes? And how will you know when He is coming? What are the prophetic signs you need to watch for? Those of you who have studied our informative free resource *Fourteen Signs Announcing Christ’s Return* will be familiar with some of these.

Increasing Danger of Annihilation

The combined power of mankind’s nuclear weapons could destroy all human life on earth several times over. Will we survive the great danger of destroying ourselves? The Book of Revelation warns of a coming global catastrophe of historic proportions.

Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths (Revelation 9:16–18).

As shocking as it may seem, a third of mankind will die in a future world war shortly before Jesus Christ returns!

Devastating Natural Disasters

Your Bible explains God's use of natural disasters to shake and warn humanity. Evangelist Gerald Weston wrote the following in his eye-opening booklet *Acts of God: Why Natural Disasters?* (pp. 12–13):

Some earthquakes build mountains, as do volcanoes. Hawaii is a very popular tourist destination, as are the islands of the South Pacific. These beautiful volcanic islands are the stuff of songs and musicals. But, as we know, volcanoes can be very dangerous to anyone living too close to them. Thousands of people perished in Pompeii and the surrounding area when Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD. Fifty-seven people died when Mount St. Helens erupted on May 18, 1980.... There were warning signs of a catastrophe in the making, just as there had been before Mount Vesuvius erupted. The north side of St. Helens bulged some 300 feet and was growing five to six feet a day. Warnings to evacuate the area were given, but as is often the case, people did not heed such warnings: "A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; the simple pass on and are punished" (Proverbs 27:12).

The book of Revelation reveals an even greater "natural" disaster yet to come: "And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth" (16:18).

Prophecy warns of many such attention-getting disasters leading up to the return of Jesus Christ (e.g., Isaiah 24:19–20; Jeremiah 4:23–27; Deuteronomy 28:23–24; Ezekiel 5:16–17). Are you physically prepared for the prophesied natural disasters to come? Have you stored enough drinking water to last a week if your water source is cut off?

Watch for disasters to come, and order your life accordingly!

The European Union Seeks Global Dominance

Today, Europe is challenged by a massive refugee influx, religious violence, economic crises, and Great Britain's uncertain status af-

ter Brexit. To recapture the prophesied power and grandeur of the ancient Roman Empire, Europe will need a strong and charismatic leader.

This future power is described as a symbolic beast with seven heads and ten horns. “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast” (Revelation 17:12–13). Ten kings or kingdoms will support this charismatic leader, producing a powerful unified force.

But notice! There is another world figure described as a beast—but *this* beast symbolically has two horns, like a lamb.

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast (Revelation 13:11–14).

Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God—this religious imposter will *appear* to be of Christ, yet will speak like a dragon. He will deceive billions with false miracles and signs. You need to watch for a respected religious figure who will influence the political and military superpower in Europe.

A Miracle-Working False Prophet Deceives Billions

Could you be deceived by a miracle-working religious figure? His miracle-working deceptions will cause billions to follow him and his false religion. Notice 2 Thessalonians 2:9: “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders.” The false prophet will even call down fire from heaven, as we saw in Revelation 13:13.

The Apostle Paul explains that this false prophet is a servant *not* of God, but of Satan. But notice that God will judge his lawless-

ness at the coming of Jesus Christ: “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

You need to watch religious trends in Europe, where a great religious revival will persuade most people to practice a false and lawless religion.

Military Alliances East of the Euphrates

As already mentioned, in the book of Revelation we read about a powerful army from the east, which will kill billions of people. The Apostle John describes this as the sixth trumpet plague. Notice where this huge force will be gathered: “Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates’” (Revelation 9:13–14). John continues:

So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed; by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths (Revelation 9:15–18).

This is describing a world war in which billions of human beings will die, as an army of 200 million drives west across the Euphrates River and destroys a third of the planet’s population! This is why Jesus Christ told us that unless those days would be shortened, no flesh would be left alive (Matthew 24:22).

What world powers are east of the Euphrates? Look at a map, and you will find nations including Iran, India, China, and Russia. Be sure to watch those nations’ military developments and international alliances.

Middle Eastern Alliances Strengthen Against Israel

History has shown that even while intra-Arab conflicts continue, warring Middle East nations will not hesitate to join forces to fight against Israel. Tentative moves toward peace have invariably given way to old tensions.

The non-Arab nation of Iran remains a threat to Israel, as massive rallies across the nation have urged Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere to fight Israel “to the end.” Iran also continues its push toward developing nuclear weapons. South of Iran, traditional disputes among Arabs and Muslims continue, yet students of Bible prophecy know to watch for growing unity among these forces against their common enemy—Israel. While some pundits mistakenly focus on Iran as Israel’s chief enemy and the main destabilizer of the region, your Bible reveals that it will be a “king of the South” that will unite several Arab nations, forming a power bloc so threatening that the prophesied “king of the North” will intensify its military actions around Jerusalem (Daniel 11:40–45). This will bring about a frightening conflict that will shake our world, but Bible students will be able to recognize that this is also a sign that Jesus Christ will soon return as prophesied.

The True Gospel Preached to All Nations

Jesus gave this sign signifying the end of man’s failed attempts to produce world peace: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14). You’ve been reading that Gospel in this booklet, which proclaims tomorrow’s world and the Kingdom of God.

The world-ruling Kingdom of God will bring peace and prosperity to all nations of the earth. It will be ruled by the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus came preaching that Gospel or good news: “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:14–15).

The prophet Isaiah reveals an inspiring promise of the Messiah’s world-ruling kingdom of peace:

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be

called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6–7).

Today's world of conflicts, oppression, and wars will be replaced by the Kingdom of God—the government of God. “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’” (Revelation 11:15).

Patience Required

As we near the Great Tribulation, true Christians will increasingly be persecuted. But Jesus instructs us how to react as religious persecution intensifies. “By your patience possess your souls. But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:19–20).

We are now in the prophesied period known as the end-time. We need to be preparing for our Savior's return. Christ will be King over all the earth, ruling from the new world capital, Jerusalem. “And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The LORD is one,’ and His name one” (Zechariah 14:8–9).

Thank God for this soon-coming wonderful world government under Jesus Christ. May we pray with all our hearts, “Your Kingdom come!”

Chapter 7

Watch and Pray

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, gave us a command to “watch” for His return. He told us, “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42). Not until the very end—the final prophesied three-and-a-half years we know of as the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord—will we be sure that Christ’s return is immediately at hand. And there is another aspect of our watching. “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

So, are you “worthy to escape” the prophesied end-time calamities? If you want to be in the prophesied Kingdom of God, you know that you need God’s grace and forgiveness, and that you need the Holy Spirit to develop God’s own righteous and holy character in you. If you haven’t already been baptized according to biblical instruction, read our free study guide *Christian Baptism: Its Real Meaning*. Remember the awesome promise given by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). And for those of you who want to counsel with one of God’s true ministers about biblical baptism, please contact the Regional Office nearest you.

As we learned earlier, one vital purpose of prophecy is to confirm our faith. Recognizing the many prophecies fulfilled in the past,

Understanding Bible Prophecy

and even seeing prophecies fulfilled in our own lifetimes today, we can gain deeper faith in the prophecies yet to come. And we can understand how we, too, can be part of the glorious future God has prophesied for His faithful Christian servants in this age, who will be resurrected as His firstfruits at His return, to serve under Him in the prophesied Kingdom of God.

Bible prophecy reveals that the greatest event in all history is coming soon—and may be coming in your lifetime. You need to be preparing for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. Our Lord gave us serious admonitions to be ready for that event.

As you apply the principles of prophecy, you will have a greater depth of understanding of your purpose in life and the glorious future of the world. Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and instructed all who heard it to “repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). The Apostle Paul carried on that message in Athens when he told his audience: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but *now commands all men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30).

You can prepare for the future by believing the true Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33), repenting of your sins, accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and receiving God’s Holy Spirit. May God bless you and your family, friends, and loved ones as you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and watch for the fulfillment of biblical prophecy ahead!

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