

# Questions & Answers

## ABOUT PROPHECY

**Q** "I have been reading your booklet called 'The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last,' and I'm still left confused as to where we stand in Bible prophecy. What comes first? The disease epidemics, or the famines, or World War III? Maybe I just don't get the full picture. What is next in line for the earth? Can you tell me?"

**A** It is difficult to pin down *exactly* where, at any given moment, we stand in the development of Bible prophecy. While there are many very specific prophecies of particular events in the Bible, we must also realize that prophecy *generalizes* about many end-time conditions. The events of the Olivet prophecy (Matt. 24, Luke 21, Mark 13) and the correlating events of Revelation show a general picture of what will happen prior to the return of Jesus Christ: False prophets, wars, disease epidemics, famines and other prophesied events actually began in the first century of the Christian era! There appears to be a certain duality or duplication of events involved. All of the above-mentioned factors were present to one degree or another prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, the prospect of the total annihilation of human life was not possible then—in fact, it was not possible until recently, with the ushering in of the atomic age. It is to this end-time age that Jesus was referring when He said: "And if those days had not been shortened, no human being

would be saved" (Matt. 24:22, Revised Standard Version).

It appears that the same type of events (wars, pestilence, etc.) will be repeated, with greater intensity, just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Even now we see such events occurring throughout the world. Such happenings will steadily build in intensity and culminate in one last final war, false prophet, famine and earthquake just before Christ sets foot on the Mount of Olives to take over the kingdoms of this world. They cannot, however, be placed in a neat package or one-two-three order. There is a certain amount of overlap. It is a mistake to attempt to be too specific in discerning the fulfillment of certain prophetic events. The main lesson in prophecy is that Christians should be *prepared* at all times by maintaining a close relationship with God so that when these events begin to happen their salvation will be assured in Christ. (For more on this subject, write for the free booklets *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last!* and *The United States and Britain in Prophecy.*)

**Q** "There are two accounts of the second coming in the New Testament. The first account says Jesus will come 'as a thief in the night,' and in the second account He will 'come in the clouds of glory, and every eye shall see him.' Now, which one (if any) can we believe?"

**A** Revelation 1:7 ("Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him") refers

to the *manner* of Christ's coming. The statement that "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2; II Pet. 3:10) refers to the *time* of his coming. He will arrive like a thief—at a time no one expects. The context of I Thessalonians 5:2 shows this: "But as to the *times* and the *seasons*, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night."

There is no contradiction between these two concepts: Christ will arrive in a dramatic, obvious *manner* (Matt. 24:29-31), but the *time* of this coming is known only to God the Father (Matt. 24:36) and it will take many by surprise just like a thief in the night.

**Q** "A while ago you people ran an article intimating that prophecy is conditional in certain instances. Could you please elaborate?"

**A** Yes, certain parts of the prophetic writings are conditional, although some prophecies such as those predicting Christ's second coming and the utopian millennial reign are unconditional.

God gives man a choice; if we repent He will have mercy on us. Leviticus 26 illustrates this principle. It enumerates the blessings and curses prophesied to come upon ancient Israel according to whether or not they kept the covenant God made with them.

The same concept is found in Deuteronomy 29 and 30: "When all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you this day, with all your heart and with all your soul; then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes, and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you . . . and he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers . . . And the Lord

your God will put all these curses upon your foes and enemies who persecuted you . . . for the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God . . . with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 30:1-10).

The entire book of Jonah is an account of how God sent one of His prophets to the ancient city of Nineveh to warn them of their impending doom if they did not mend their ways. They repented and "proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). And "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it" (verse 10).

Another example of the outcome of prophecy being delayed by repentance is found in II Chronicles 32. God had miraculously healed Hezekiah of a fatal disease, "But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem" (verse 25). God told him, "Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house . . . shall be carried to Baby-

lon; nothing shall be left . . ." (II Kings 20:17). "But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah" (II Chron. 32:26). Again, when a nation or individual repents, God has mercy on them.

**Q** "In some of your booklets that deal with prophecy of the future, you seem to indicate a belief that the end of the age and Christ's return may occur within five to ten years from now. Many sources claim Adam was created in 4004 B.C. Since God marked out a 6000-year period before Christ's millennial rule, would this not put Christ's return date some time in the year 1996?"

**A** There has been much speculation about the precise time of Jesus' return to this earth. World conditions would seem to indicate that we are living near the close of an age. Many of man's global problems seem to have reached the point of no return. Environmental destruction, the capacity for total war, rapid and continuing economic breakdown, and the moral and social problems of modern society amount to strong evidence

that Christ must soon intervene to save man from himself (Matt. 24:22, Moffatt).

But we cannot know just when Christ will return. No man knows the day or the hour of that momentous event (Matt. 24:36). We cannot set dates for the fulfillment of major prophetic events, since such dates are not revealed in biblical chronology. And there is even a great deal of disagreement among scholars and experts as to the exact dates for key past events such as the creation and Noah's flood.

**Q** "In David Jon Hill's article, 'What the World Needs Is Hope,' it was stated that God plans to expand His family for eternity by adding sons and daughters. Will God do this by spiritual creation as He created the angels, or is this given for us to know (I Cor. 2:9)?"

**A** The concept that God will continue to expand His family for eternity is a very logical inference drawn from Isaiah 9:7, a prophecy of Christ which states: "Of the increase of his government and of peace *there will be no end. . . .*"

Some have speculated that when we are immortal spirit beings, sons of God in His family, we will have a part in extending God's Kingdom throughout the universe. Perhaps God will create other human beings on other planets in the universe who will then be afforded an opportunity to become members of God's family as we were. *Detailed specifics about the next life are few and far between in the Bible, but we are promised: "... I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5).*

**Q** "In the article on 'The God Family' the author mentions God's '7,000-year plan for earth.' Would you please explain what he means by this?"

**A** Up until now God has allowed approximately 6,000 years for humanity to write the painful lesson of "doing its own thing"—going its own way without the revealed knowledge of its Creator.

A study of biblical chronology indicates that Adam and Eve (our first parents) were created about 4,000

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years before Christ (Gen. 5, 10; I Chron. 1-9; Matt. 1; Luke 3). And almost another 2,000 years have elapsed since the time of Christ's birth—totaling nearly 6,000 years of human civilization to date.

And the Bible tells us that shortly after the appearance of Christ on this earth again, a peaceful, utopian, 1,000-year reign begins on this planet (Rev. 20:1-10; Isa. 11).

These two general spans of time (approximately 6,000 years of man's rule; approximately 1,000 years of God's rule) add up to a period of about 7,000 years.

Further, the 7,000-year concept comes from an *analogy* between the perfect weekly cycle (seven days) and the apparent 6,000 years allotted to mankind prior to the millennium.

We must realize that even though the saints will live and reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4), there is still an undetermined period of time allowed *after* the millennium during which Satan will be loosed and the Great White Throne judgment will take place (Rev. 20:11-12). This span of time is *in addition* to the 1,000-year period.

The main biblical indication of a 7000-year plan is the evidence provided by the millennium as a type of God's rest or Sabbath (compare Revelation 20 and Hebrews 4). If the millennium represents a "Sabbath," then it would be logically preceded by six similar 1,000-year "days."

II Peter 3:8 provides a basis for setting the length of each millennial day: "... One day is with the Lord as [Greek: *hos*] a thousand years, and a thousand years as [*hos*] one day." But we need to realize that even if we understand this as a literal statement regarding a 7,000-year plan, it is not giving us a precise, measured duration.

Why not? Because *hos* before numerals denotes "nearly," "about," "approximately." Compare its usage in Mark 5:13, "about two thousand"; Mark 8:9, "about four thousand"; John 6:19, "about five and twenty or thirty"; John 21:8, "as it were two hundred cubits"; Acts 13:18, 20; "about the time of forty years... about the

space of four hundred and fifty years."

The biblical meaning behind man's 6,000-year period of human history, marked by costly trial and error plus ignorance and rejection of God's revealed Word, is carefully explained in our booklet titled *Why Were You Born?*

**Q** "What is the scriptural basis for your statements which classify the white horses of Revelation 19:11-14 as symbolic?"

**A** The book of Revelation is filled with symbolism. (This is also true of the book of Zechariah in the Old Testament.) God often uses symbols to create a certain timeless imagery in the prophetic sections of His Word.

In Revelation 19 we find quite liberal use of such imagery or symbolism. For example, verse 2 uses the term "fornication" to represent an illicit political relationship between the great false church (symbolically called the "great whore") and the governments of this world.

In verse 7 the "Lamb" represents Jesus Christ (John 1:29). Verse 15 contains the imagery of a sharp sword proceeding from Christ's mouth. Rather than a literal sword, this sword represents the Word of God (Heb. 4:12).

Now, regarding the white horses, we must realize that *physical* horses are confined to this earth. They are made of flesh and do *not* dwell in heaven. So we may deduce one of two things: 1) the horses are *spiritual*, or 2) they are *symbolic*.

Since the rest of the chapter, and indeed the book, deals heavily in symbolism, it would appear that the latter is also the case here.

**Q** "Are we headed for a time of worldwide national catastrophes? Is this what Jesus meant in Matthew 24, when he said, 'All these are the beginning of sorrows? Is the worst yet to come?'"

**A** The answer is an emphatic "YES." Bible prophecy speaks of a time of worsening

worldwide national conditions affecting all nations, but specifically singling out the peoples of the English-speaking world.

God, through the pen of the prophet Ezekiel, forewarned that fully two thirds of our people were to perish by warfare, catastrophic weather calamities, famines and resultant disease epidemics (read Ezekiel 5:12). However, the prophet never reached ancient Israel with this prophecy. Those people had gone into captivity well over a hundred years before his time. Ezekiel 5:12 is for us today. The clear, unmistakable proof of our national identity may be obtained by writing for our FREE book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.

Most Bible prophecy is dual. The horrible penalties for disobedience listed in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28—as well as the first chapter of Joel—not only were inflicted upon ancient Israel, but are prophetic for the near future. These punishments are to fall on our peoples around the world today—barring a much-needed national repentance.

**Q** "Everyone at one time or another has heard that God gives warning before He sends punishment—that those who heed the warning will be spared the cataclysm. On the other hand, nearly all the apostles died by violent means. How are the violent deaths of so many repentant explained in light of this?"

**A** The scripture you are probably basing your first statement on is Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets."

Bible prophecies are sometimes general overall warnings to a nation as a whole.

God also gives a general overall warning to Christians. He states through the apostle Paul that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (II Tim. 3:12). The apostles themselves were practically promised martyrdom from the outset (see John 21:18-19; 16:1-2; 15:18-21). So in this sense they were warned,

but were not delivered from violence at the hand of unbelievers.

It is important to realize that there is a difference between suffering for righteousness' sake (I Pet. 1:6-7; 3:14; 4:12-16) and suffering for one's personal or national sins. God in His wisdom did allow the apostles to go through various trials and even martyrdom for the gospel's sake. This was in spite of the fact that they were repentant, righteous servants of His. In contrast, the entire wicked city of Nineveh received a reprieve from destruction when God saw how enthusiastically they repented. Although these people were probably not leading deeply spiritual lives even after their repentance, God gave them mercy.

Reviewing the lives of all of God's servants as recorded in the Bible, it is obvious that one's spiritual state does not necessarily have that much to do with the physical course of one's life. One of the writers of the Psalms observed that wicked men are often blessed while righteous men suffer. But he realized that in the end God will see to it that all these seeming injustices are equalized (Psalm 73).

**Q** "Some scriptures indicate that at the time of the end true Christians will be persecuted and even put to death (Rev. 13:7; Matt. 24:9). On the other hand, there are verses (notably Psalms 91:7-11 and Revelation 3:10) which promise that there is a way for true Christians to escape the trials and tribulations of that day. How can these apparently contradictory scriptures be reconciled?"

**A** Psalms 91:7-13 reads: "A thousand may fall at your side; but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your habitation, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the

young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot."

These verses, like many in the Psalms, are written in a poetic literary style. They express praise for God's deliverance, which is described in somewhat hyperbolic language. But by no stretch of the imagination can this psalm be taken as a definite promise of God to always protect every individual Christian.

As Hebrews, chapter 11, vividly describes, many righteous people have been martyred in the past (Heb. 11:35-38). And many of the righteous will be killed in the future (Rev. 6:9-11). Tradition indicates that all of the original apostles (with the possible exception of John) died violently at the hand of persecutors. Even Christ Himself was crucified.

Revelation 3:10, part of the message to the church at Philadelphia, states: "Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth." While it is obvious that this verse cannot be applied universally to every single Christian, it does appear to have a definite application to "the crisis at the close." Even then, however, no individual Christian has a "carte blanche" promise for personal, physical safety.

Ecclesiastes 9:11 states that "time and chance" happen to us all. If we are caught in the middle of an accident, a war, or a national disaster, perhaps God will have mercy on us and deliver us from our troubles. But again, He may choose, in His perfect wisdom, to let us live through such trials or allow us to die as a result of them.

But does this imply that God is in some way remiss to allow such things to occur? Isaiah 57:1-2 reads: "The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart, devout men are taken away, while no one understands. [But] the righteous man is taken away from calamity, he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in uprightness." So even death can be a haven from this world's troubles.

But where does this leave the av-

erage Christian hoping for some form of security to hang on to in this unstable time? Notice Paul's personal example. He experienced a great number of devastating personal trials (see II Cor. 11:23-28), but he never lost faith. He had his mind set on the *only* really definite promise of salvation recorded in Scripture—the *promise of the resurrection*. He was able to say: "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him . . . that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:8-11).

Paul valued being a Christian, and being able to preach the message Christ had given him, over and above his own life. He knew that whatever happened to him physically, he would eventually be resurrected to immortal life. This kind of salvation is what Christians today ought to be pinning their hopes on, rather than some type of physical deliverance which may or may not materialize. □

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