

How to Understand  
**PROPHECY**



An Ambassador College Publication

# How to Understand **PROPHECY**

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*The major events that will headline tomorrow's news are already pre-recorded. About one third of the Bible is prophecy, and most prophetic passages apply NOW — to our time — the world in which we live. Yet Biblical prophecy is a complete mystery to millions.*

*Why? Because certain vital keys are not understood. They have become lost.*

*It is now God's time to reveal these most important keys to Biblical understanding. Read of them in this timely booklet and really begin to understand Bible prophecy.*

**B**IBLICAL prophecy has perplexed millions! Many hundreds of volumes have been written — articles, leaflets, tracts printed — thousands of sermons have been preached — all about Biblical prophecy!

And yet — look at all the *confusion!*

Many believe ALL the prophecies were merely the pronouncements of wild-eyed fanatics carried away with visions of doom. Still others believe the prophecies are confined to the Old Testament, and are all *done away*.

Still others preach that MOST Biblical prophecy is for *our day — now!*

What is the truth?

### **What Is Prophecy?**

The Hebrew word for prophet, *navi*, means “one who announces or brings a message from God.” The word “prophet” in the English language means essentially the same thing — “one who speaks by divine inspiration as the interpreter or spokesman of God,” whether it be a message of duty and warning, or a prediction of future events.

A prophet is one who speaks *for* God; hence, the prefix *pro* (from the Greek language — from which our word *prophet* is derived) which means “for” and “before.” So that a prophet is one who speaks *for God*, or one who tells *before* — one who predicts, foretells, prophesies.

### **Common Misconceptions**

Many people falsely *assume* all prophecies are dire foretellings of catastrophic events, of the wrathful ven-

geance of a harsh God who is about to descend with terrible fury upon His hapless subjects here below!

This is FAR from the truth! *Many* of the prophecies foretell a time of peace, of happiness, of restoration, of joy, of great prosperity and physical wealth for those who are serving God. (Request our free booklet *The Wonderful World Tomorrow — What It Will Be Like* for a detailed description of these remarkable prophecies of peace and prosperity.)

*Many* prophecies foretell, in advance, certain events which are to happen, the rise and fall of nations, the *course* of world affairs!

Prophecy is a chronicle of the great PLAN God is working out here below! It describes this plan *in detail*, showing how God *knows* it will work out, according to human nature, together with other *special interventions* of God.

Prophecy is HISTORY *written in advance!*

### Who Were the Prophets?

To most professing Christians the writings of men like Daniel, Zechariah, Joel and John (in Revelation) are shrouded in mysterious symbolism and meaningless metaphor.

So complete is this blindness that some “higher critics” have even dared to propose that such prophetic writings are merely the rantings of drug-driven hallucinators of antiquity.

But here is the true story of these men of God.

The prophets were not a special hierarchy, a guild, or a certain “class” of men! Many of them were chosen from various of the twelve tribes of Israel, and, unlike those of the tribe of Levi, were not *born* into their office. They were princes, shepherders, farmers, fishermen, and priests. They came from many different tribes, and God called them at many different times.

*Daniel* was a Jew, of the tribe of Judah, one of the princes of the nation, with whom God began to deal — revealing the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams, and causing Daniel to write many prophecies which he, himself, *did not understand!* (Dan. 12:8-9.)



*Jeremiah* was one “of the priests” (Jer. 1:1), who argued that he was *too young* to become a prophet of God! *Jonah* ran from the call of God, *Isaiah* claimed he was a man of *unclean lips* and didn’t want to prophesy, and *Zephaniah* was one of the princes of Judah, possibly of the descendants of Hezekiah.

Notice the way God called Amos!

“The words of Amos, who was among the *herdmen* of Tekoa, *which he saw . . .*” (Amos 1:1). Amos was going about his daily life, *among the herdsmen*, minding his own business, and God expressly REVEALED a certain message to him. Later, when Amos was approached by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, who told Amos not to prophesy, but to go into another country, Amos answered, “. . . I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was *an herdman*, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit [margin — wild figs]: and the LORD [Eternal] took me *as I followed the flock*, and the Eternal said unto me, Go *prophesy* unto my people Israel” (Amos 7:14-15).

Amos was *herding sheep* — NOT “looking” for some kind of religious “experience” — and GOD CALLED him.

As the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write, God *called* His prophets — sent them as divinely commissioned *messengers*. “. . . The prophecy came not in old time by the *will of man*: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” (II Peter 1:21).

Many had to be *made willing* to carry the message of God. These men WERE NOT SEEKING some kind of “spiritual experience,” they were not earnestly *desiring* the office of a “prophet.” They were *chosen* of God!

And on these men, together with the New Testament apostles, is based the very *Church of God!* “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and *are built* upon the *foundation* of the apostles *and* PROPHEETS, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:19-20).

### Why Was Prophecy Written?

God inspired his Prophet Amos to tell us, “The Lord Eternal never does anything without telling his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7, Moffatt translation).

Before God intervenes in the affairs of a nation, or the world, He first sends His servants to warn those who will be directly affected by what He intends to do. Why does He do this? To give them a chance to CHANGE their ways — to REPENT of their sins — so that the prophesied calamity *need not come to pass*.

God is absolutely fair, just and righteous. He sends a WARNING, and gives people a *chance* to repent.

The purpose of prophecy, therefore, is threefold. First, it is given in love to encourage people to repent of their sins so they can escape punishment. Second, it is given for those who don't repent at first, so that when their punishment comes, they will then acknowledge their sins and repent toward the God who will then deliver and rescue them! (Deut. 4:25-31.) Third, it announces in advance the coming Kingdom of God, the wonderful world tomorrow — a time of the restoration of this earth to a condition of prosperity, peace and abundant well-being.

### Prophecies Preserved

God selected Jonah as a prophet and, after making him *willing* to carry the message of God, commissioned him to go to the great city of Nineveh. Jonah finally went. Jonah prophesied, lifting up his voice in loud warning as he traversed the great, sprawling city of Nineveh.

Finally the word came to the king. The king realized the *seriousness* of the prophecy, and "... arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God. . . . And God *saw their works*, that they turned from *their evil way*; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3:6-10).

Notice it! Jonah fulfilled *his commission!* Jonah's job of orally shouting the warning was over! Jonah had been

made willing, *had carried the message* to Nineveh, and Nineveh had actually repented!

Then — if the prophecy had served its purpose, if the warning had been heeded, if Jonah's commission was over, *why the need of writing the prophecy?*

Jonah *WROTE* the whole thing, and it forms a part of your Bible today!

Notice the 36th chapter of Jeremiah.

“And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the Eternal, saying, Take thee a roll of a book [scroll], and write therein all the words that *I have spoken* unto thee against *Israel*, and against Judah, and against all the nations. . . . It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way. . . . Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch *wrote* from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Eternal, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book” (Jer. 36:1-4).

After the writing of this dire warning toward ancient Israel and Judah, notice what happened: “Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the Lord: therefore go thou, and *READ* in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Eternal in the ears of the people in the Eternal's house upon the fasting day. . . . It may be they will present their supplication before the Eternal, and will return every one from his evil way. . . . And Baruch the son of Neriah *did* according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, *reading* in the book the words of the Eternal in the Eternal's house” (Jer. 36:5-8).

The people heard it, and also one of the princes who was present. He carried the message to other princes, whereupon they sent Jehudi (verse 14) to tell Baruch to come to them. He arose, took the scroll in his hand and began to read it to them. They then *told the king* (verse 20).

Now notice what happened! “So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi *read it* in the ears of the



king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves [columns], he [the king] cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until *all the roll was consumed* in the fire that was on the hearth" (verses 21-23). The king then commanded (verse 26) that Baruch and Jeremiah be seized. However, they escaped, being hidden of God.

Stop and think for a moment. God had revealed a message to Jeremiah. Jeremiah had caused the message to be WRITTEN. The message had then reached *all the people*. Then *all the princes* heard it. Finally, it reached the KING! On this occasion, unlike Nineveh, neither the king, the princes, nor the people repented!

However, the purpose of the prophecy was *fulfilled* — wasn't it? Everyone had HEARD, orally, the *exact words* of this amazing prophecy *read in their own ears!*

But — IF the whole purpose of this prophecy had *already been fulfilled* — if there were not yet a FUTURE fulfillment of this prophecy — THEN WHY DID GOD CAUSE EVERY WORD TO BE WRITTEN THE SECOND TIME?

"Then the word of the Eternal came to Jeremiah, AFTER that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again *another roll*, and write in it ALL THE FORMER WORDS that were in the *first* roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned" (Jer. 36:27-28).

Do you see? God caused every single word, and other words besides, to be WRITTEN the second time. Also, He caused Jonah to *write* the prophecy even though the city repented. *God wanted these words preserved!* God wanted them to come right on down to our time — *now!* You will begin to see why as you continue reading.

### Written for OUR DAY!

The very PURPOSE for *writing* one single word of prophecy is to *preserve* the prophecies for future generations! God saw to it, even by intervening in a divine mir-

acle, that His sacred words were to be *preserved* to all generations.

Here's *part* of the reason: "Now these things were *our examples*, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (I Cor. 10:6). God caused these prophecies to be written for *our examples, today!* "Now *all these things* happened unto them for ensamples: and they are WRITTEN for *our admonition*, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11).

And "For whatsoever things were written *aforetime* were written for our *learning*, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

God caused the prophecies to be written to SHOW His servants how world conditions would work out. "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to *shew unto his servants* things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Rev. 1:1).

Why? So His servants in *this* modern age can come to *understand* the prophecies, *preaching* and *publishing* them to the modern nations for whom they were intended! *Read Ezekiel 33!*

And, as we said before, God says He will NOT cause any major world condition to occur, that He will not intervene in world affairs, unless His servants — those who are members of the very body of Jesus Christ — know about it *first!* "Surely the Eternal God *will do nothing*, but he REVEALETH his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

One full third of the Bible is prophecy — and about 90% of all that prophecy still pertains to OUR DAY — *right now!*

### The Amazing Prophecy of Ezekiel

Notice what happened to Ezekiel! "... I was among the *captives* by the river of Chebar . . . and I saw visions of God" (Ezek. 1:1). *Read* the first chapter of Ezekiel! Here is a picture of the very throne of the One who later became Jesus Christ! Ezekiel saw a great whirlwind (verse 4) in the

midst of which were four living creatures (verse 5), carrying, over their heads, an expanse of translucent material (verse 22) the color of glass, or crystal. On this expanse of beautiful, crystal-like material, was a throne! (Verse 26.)

Seated upon the throne was One "as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward [compare with Rev. 1:13-16], and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. . . . THIS WAS the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord"! (Ezek. 1:26-28.)

Ezekiel then heard a voice (chapter 1:28) and the voice said, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. . . . And he said unto me, Son of man . . . I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD" (Ezek. 2:1, 3, 4).

The Prophet Ezekiel was given a message by the Eternal God. He was sent to the House of Israel! He was also given prophecies against the Ammonites (25:2), against Moab (25:8), against Edom (25:12), against the Philistines (25:15), against Tyre (26:2-3), against Egypt (29:2), and against other nations, a great distance from his location in Babylon.

But Ezekiel *was in captivity*. Yet the word of the Eternal came to him, giving him these messages — commissioning him to warn these specific nations!

But Ezekiel *was never released* to go to these nations!

### A Jewish Captive

Imagine it! Picture, if you can, a young Jewish lad in a concentration camp in Germany, during World War II. Let's suppose Almighty God reveals to him startling visions, symbolizing what is to happen in Egypt, Japan, Great Britain and the United States! God tells him to "get you into Egypt, Japan, Britain and the United States."

Are his German captors going to *believe* he has received such a message? Even if they DID — is it feasible they would *let him go*, in order to travel all about the



world during a time of warfare, reaching the leaders of these nations? Even if he COULD feasibly travel from place to place, is it possible anyone with such a message, claiming to be a prophet sent from God, would be ushered right into the White House of the President of the United States, into the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, or to No. 10 Downing Street in London?

*Of course not!*

*Ezekiel never reached these nations!*

Instead, he WROTE the prophecies!

Do you realize that Ezekiel, a young captive Jewish lad, in a veritable "concentration camp" in Babylon, was given prophecies toward *Israel* over 120 years *after Israel had already gone into a captivity?* And that he *never reached* the ancient Israelites with the message?

Ezekiel saw visions of impending destruction upon Israel "in the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity" (Ezek. 1:2-3). Jehoiachin went into captivity in 596 B. C. The fifth year brings us to about 592 B.C., or over 125 years *after* the removal of the last of the remaining northern tribes, 721-718 B.C. But more about the dating of the book of Ezekiel later in this booklet.

If you have not yet seen the startling identity of the lost ten tribes of Israel PROVED, write immediately for our FREE, full-color book *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*. Worldwide mailing addresses are on page 32.

Ezekiel's prophecy, never, in all history, until NOW, reached the ears of the nations, peoples or kings for whom the messages were intended.

Rather, Ezekiel WROTE these amazing prophecies! He wrote them because God was intending to PRESERVE THEM for our day!

Prophecy is DUAL! Notice the theme of duality running throughout the Bible. There was the first man Adam, and the second Adam, who was Christ (I Cor. 15:45-47). There is the Old Testament, and the New Testament. There was the old Jerusalem and a new heavenly Jerusalem. Study Matthew 24! Here, Jesus answered the ques-



tions of the disciples about the *end of the age*, and His imminent return! Many believe Matthew 24 was totally FULFILLED in 70 A.D. at the destruction of Jerusalem. This is entirely baseless! They must believe, by this assumption, that Jesus was a liar! But Christ *did not lie*. What happened in part in 70 A.D. was merely a forerunner, a *type* of the REAL FULFILLMENT of ALL the prophecies of Matthew 24!

Ezekiel's prophecies are also *DUAL!* And the real, LITERAL fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel is right ahead of us NOW!

### Prophetic Time Lapses

Another crucial aspect of the prophetic time factor is what we shall call *prophetic time lapses*. This very factor has been a major stumbling block to many students of prophecy. Even learned commentators have failed to grasp the principle of *prophetic time lapses*. This is especially true in *Isaiah*, *Daniel* and *Revelation*.

An excellent example of such a time lapse may be found in Isaiah 61:1-3. In the first three verses we find a short prophecy concerning Christ and His commission. (Actually the complete prophecy continues to the end of the chapter, but the first three verses will suffice to illustrate the point.) Jesus Himself quoted this section from Isaiah when He had occasion to read in the synagogue in Nazareth.

Notice it in Luke 4:16-20: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias [Greek for Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it is written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. AND HE CLOSED THE BOOK. . . ."

Notice! Jesus *did not finish* quoting the rest of Isaiah 61:2! But why not?

Simply because the first part of that prophecy concerned Christ's earthly ministry from 27-31 A.D. only! But the rest of the verse did not apply to the time of His first coming.

The remainder of the prophecy — starting in midverse — applies to Christ's second coming — that time known as "the day of the Lord" — or as Isaiah expressed it, "AND THE DAY OF VENGEANCE of our God. . ."

In other words, we see in *one verse* of Bible prophecy a prophetic *time lapse* of almost 2000 years between the fulfillment of the first and second parts of that one verse.

This principle is not uncommon in Isaiah's writing and in other prophetic books of the Bible.

The longest single prophecy in the Bible (found in Daniel 11) covers a time period from the Medo-Persian Empire to the *return* of Christ in a mere 45 verses.

In Revelation 12 we find a brief biography of Satan the devil from his initial rebellion *many millennia* ago to the years *and months* just *ahead!* And all in 7 short verses!

Therefore, we see that it is very important when studying prophetic passages to get God's guidance in understanding the *time element* involved.

### **Prophetic Symbolism**

But understanding time factors alone is not enough. We must add to this a knowledge of God's use of *symbolism*. To grasp prophetic meanings God often uses symbols, analogies, metaphors and allegories in describing future events. It is critical to understand *when* such devices are being used and when a word is to be taken literally! Many have gone astray because they have failed to grasp the *symbolic* meaning of a word as opposed to a literal application.

### **Bible Self-interpreting**

As a case in point, notice Revelation 1:20: "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right

hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. *The seven stars are the angels* of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

Here we find stars being used as a symbol for *angels*. In fact, the name *Lucifer* (the great cherub who became known as “Satan” after his rebellion) means “Shining One” or “Morning Star” (Isaiah 14:12).

Thus we find a *principle* of prophetic understanding. When a word is obviously used as a symbol, we must look elsewhere in the Bible for the interpretation or meaning of that symbol.

The symbol for an angel is often a “star.”

### Other Common Symbols

God uses many symbols when describing prophetic events. In Revelation 17 we find two mysterious symbols used in portraying events which are not too far in the future. In verse one we read, “. . . I will shew unto you the judgment of the great *whore* that sitteth upon *many waters*.”

Here we must know the meaning of “many waters” and just who this “whore” is if we are to understand the prophecy. Verse 18 of the same chapter gives us the answer in part. “And the woman [whore] which thou sawest is **THAT GREAT CITY**, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.” Therefore, we understand that the woman, or whore, as God calls her, represents a *city*-centered entity which has influence over kings — that, in fact, has ruled and will *rule* over other rulers!

Verse 15 tells us what the “waters” represent. “. . . The *waters* which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are **PEOPLES**, and multitudes, and **NATIONS**, and tongues.”

But to really understand the symbolism of the “woman” in this chapter, we need additional information. We find that throughout the Bible a woman often is used to signify a **CHURCH**. The congregation of Israel was called the “church in the wilderness” according to Acts 7:38. And in describing how God brought Israel out of Egypt and made them a great nation, the Bible uses the analogy of a



female baby growing up to womanhood in Ezekiel 16. Notice the phraseology.

"... Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem [representative of the whole nation of Israel]... thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and played the *harlot*... and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them... thou hast taken thy sons and daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me... How weak is thine heart... seeing that thou doest... the work of an imperious whorish WOMAN" (Ezek. 16:3, 15, 17, 20, 30). Therefore, we see the "church in the wilderness" — ancient Israel — was represented by a *woman* who became an adulterous wife to God.

In the New Testament the true and false churches are also represented as women. In Ephesians 5:22-32, Paul draws a parallel between the husband-wife relationship and Christ's relationship to the Church. Revelation 19 speaks of the "marriage of the Lamb," and the Church is represented as the *bride* of Christ. The true Church is called "Jerusalem which is above... which is the *mother* of us all" in Galatians 4:26.

Also the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Church at Corinth, says, "... I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to *one husband*, that I may present you as a chaste *virgin* to Christ" (II Cor. 11:2).

The principle is consistent. Biblical symbolism often depicts a church as a woman.

Getting back to Revelation 17, we can see, then, that the great "whore" which rules over nations and kingdoms must be a false *church*! It is called a "mother" in verse 5 and a "woman" in verse 6.

When we understand the symbolism, then we can see that Revelation 17 is talking about a *religious* entity based in a great *city*, which exercises influence over human kingdoms and *nations* which speak various languages!

Verse 9 of the same chapter tells us the "woman" or church being referred to sits on seven hills or *mountains*. This may have a *literal* application and it may have a symbolic one.





Photo Researchers



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### The Symbolic "Mountain"

This brings us to another symbol often used in Bible prophecy. That of the "mountain." This term is often used to represent a kingdom or government.

Jeremiah 51:24-25 provides a good illustration of this principle. Notice verse 24: "And I will render unto *Babylon* and to all the inhabitants of *Chaldea* all their evil that they have done in *Zion* in your sight, saith the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O DESTROYING MOUNTAIN, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth."

Here we find the term "mountain" used to describe the *Babylonian kingdom*.

Again in Daniel 2 we find the same symbol used. Notice verse 35, last part: "... And the stone that smote the image became a great *mountain*, and filled the whole earth."

Now, if we try to understand this literally, it makes little sense! Normally, a literal mountain comes to a peak of some kind. Can you picture such an entity "filling" a



E. S. Ross



The horrifying weaponry of modern warfare! The Apostle John, seeing such machinery of death in vision some 2000 years ago, could only liken it to destructive and harmful insects of his day. He used the symbolism of scorpions and locusts to describe end-time armies and their weaponry.

round earth? Obviously, the term "mountain" is used symbolically here. Daniel has just been recounting Nebuchadnezzar's *dream*. The entire dream was based on symbols. Go back and read verses 31-35 to get the whole picture.

Then God *explains* the terminology used in the preceding verses in verses 36-45. Note especially verse 44, which explains what the "mountain" that fills the whole earth is: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a *kingdom*, which shall never be destroyed: and the *kingdom* shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

Now the meaning becomes clear! God was showing the world's kingdoms by means of the image. The various parts of the image represent various world-ruling kingdoms, namely the Babylonian (which Nebuchadnezzar ruled over), the Medo-Persian (which followed it), the Greek and finally the Roman. Then the "stone" which grew into a "mountain" destroys the last of these kingdoms, which is the final "resurrection," or revival, of the



end-time Roman Empire. Christ will return and set up His *Kingdom*, which will be a WORLD-RULING Kingdom that will endure forever! That is what is pictured by the "mountain" that fills the whole earth.

### Other Strange Symbols

In Revelation 9 we find still more mysterious symbolism. In verse one we again find the star symbol used for an angel. Here the "star" is personified and performs a certain duty for God. "... And I saw a *star* fall from heaven . . . and to *him* was given the key of the bottomless pit."

Of course, there is no such thing as a "bottomless pit." This is an unfortunate translation. It should more correctly be rendered "the abyssal shaft," or "abyss," as has been done by other translators.

The next verses give a picture of billowing smoke emitting from the mouth of this abyss and darkening the sun. From the smoke emerge some very unusual *locusts!* Verses 3-10 give a full description of these bizarre creatures. They are described as having "tails like unto scorpions," a *sting* like a scorpion, being armor-plated and having a roar like the sound of pounding battle horses! We are told that these nightmarish "locusts" are able to *fly!*

It should be apparent that John is not describing literal locusts! Whatever he is describing seems to be controlled by *men* (verse 7). Interestingly enough, these locusts (or the men) have long hair as women (verse 8).

It becomes apparent that what John is seeing is *modern military weaponry* at its hideous worst! Today's frightening array of weaponry would give pause to the bravest man of *our* time, much more of John's time! And how else could the apostle describe it? There were no jet planes or rocket-launching helicopters in his day. The heart-stopping roar of hundreds of jet fighters and bombers was unknown at that time. To see men at the controls of such instruments of destruction would have been a shattering experience for any first-century ex-fisherman! Who in John's time could have envisioned laser beams and flame-throwing tanks? Could any have foreseen the advent of

giant Polaris missiles being emitted from the bowels of a nuclear-powered, undersea monster called a "submarine"? And what about the weapons John saw that *we* don't know of yet? Perhaps even more terrifying weapons are on the drawing boards?

Even if God had inspired John to write in modern military shoptalk, who would have understood any of it before the latter part of this modern age of space travel? John *had* to use the language of his day. Thus, the symbolism of great flying locusts.

In verse 11 we find the motivating force behind this great military power described. "And they had a king over them, which is the *angel* of the bottomless pit [abyss], whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath *his name Apollyon* [Destroyer!]."

This fallen angel or demon is none other than Satan the devil — the Destroyer. He is the old serpent of Revelation 12:9, who is called the "god of this world" in II Corinthians 4:4.

He is the same one who gives his power to a great end-time false prophet (II Thes. 2:7-9). He will stir up certain kings or rulers to amalgamate their military forces to become the greatest war-making machine in history!

### How to Evaluate Prophecy

We have explained several Biblical principles concerning prophecy: duality, prophetic time lapses, symbolism.

Now we propose to explain *logical systems* that you can use to evaluate Biblical prophecy.

Actually, we must present *two* such *logical systems* — one for the analysis of Bible prophecies *already* fulfilled in the *past* and the other for the analysis of Bible prophecies *yet to be* fulfilled in the *future*.

### Past Prophecies

There are three steps to the process:

- 1) Read the prophecies in the Bible.
- 2) Read the fulfillments in history.



3) Prove that the prophecies were written in the Bible *long before* the historic fulfillments.

It sounds simple. And it is.

Look at the procedure again.

First, read the prophecies in the Bible concerning those international events which have occurred in the past. But to read them you must of course *find* them. (Understanding them is generally quite easy.)

We can give you a start. There are certain key chapters with which you should be familiar: Daniel 8 and 11 for the astoundingly accurate ancient history of the Persian, Grecian and Roman empires; Isaiah 53 for the in-advance setting forth of the purpose of the Messiah's physical life.

These are but two examples — there are literally dozens of others. (To go further, send for our free reprint article "The Middle East in Prophecy." It is almost exclusively devoted to a discussion of Bible prophecies which have already been fulfilled.)

Second, read the actual historical occurrences — the fulfillment — as they were originally recorded by unbiased, independent, secular sources. Prove just how accurate Daniel 8 and 11 and Isaiah 53 *really* were. An easy place to begin your historical search would be a good Bible commentary, for example, the one by Jamieson, Fausett and Brown. But go further. Check some authoritative history books. George Rawlinson's *Manual of Ancient History*, for example, is excellent for showing the historical fulfillment of Daniel 11.

We are sure that you will find an incredibly precise correlation between the clear statements of prophecy and the actual historical events. Even Bible critics admit this. In fact, as odd as it sounds, "fulfilled prophecy" is the underlying motivation *for* their criticism. Because *if* — and here is our *third* and final point — the prophecies of the Bible were indeed written *before* the historical event had occurred, then it would be embarrassingly obvious that no man could have made them up.

A Supernatural Being — a *Great God* to be blunt — must have been involved.

This is not a very desirable conclusion for certain individuals. And so the advent of Biblical criticism. Here was a method by which self-appointed critics sought to demonstrate that Bible prophecies were in fact written *after* the events had occurred. They hoped to prove that what “appeared” to be spectacular prophecy was merely ordinary history. Or, more accurately, history written in a “prophetic style.”

So the whole issue of Bible prophecy — indeed the whole issue of the divine inspiration and validity of the entire Bible — focuses in on this one point: Were the prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, for example, *forgeries*, written after the historical events described — as some few Bible critics claim? Or can we believe the dates undeniably stamped by the Bible itself?

For the sake of brevity, we will only cite the book of Ezekiel as an example.

### Date of Ezekiel

Ezekiel is one of the easiest of the prophets to date. No one was any more thorough — he gives us no less than twelve *specific dates* in his book.

Ezekiel dates his prophecies from the year of “*Jehoiachin’s captivity*” by Nebuchadnezzar which occurred at the time of the spring equinox in 596 B.C. (II Chron. 36:10). Since all historians agree upon the dates of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, we can compose the following list of dates for the book of Ezekiel:

- Chapter 1:1-2 5th day of the 4th month in the 5th year (592 B.C.)
- Chapter 8:1 5th day of the 6th month in the 6th year (591 B.C.)
- Chapter 20:1 10th day of the 5th month in the 7th year (590 B.C.)
- Chapter 24:1 10th day of the 10th month in the 9th year (beginning of 587 B.C.)
- Chapter 26:1 1st day of a month in the 11th year (586 B.C.)

- Chapter 29:1 12th day of the 10th month in the 10th year (end of 587 B.C.)
- Chapter 29:17 1st day of the 1st month in the 27th year (570 B.C.)
- Chapter 30:20 7th day of the 1st month in the 11th year (586 B.C.)
- Chapter 32:1 1st day of the 12th month in the 12th year (beginning of 584 B.C.)
- Chapter 32:17 15th day of the month in the 12th year (584 B.C.)
- Chapter 33:21 5th day of the 10th month in the 12th year (end of 585 B.C.)
- Chapter 40:1 10th day of the beginning month of the civil year — Tishri, the seventh month — in the 25th year (572 B.C.)

Now that's *evidence!* Yet some critics just toss aside such careful, meticulous dating!

### Where Critics Go Wrong

Why, then, do the same critics attempt to place the authorship of the book of Ezekiel between 400 and 230 B.C.?

The answer is twofold. First they must assume — without proof — that Ezekiel's prophecies are *not* of divine origin. Then, proceeding from this assumption, they reason that Ezekiel *had* to have had certain historical information available before he could have written these remarkable "histories."

Let's put it bluntly: We are asked to believe that Ezekiel's dates are an out-and-out *fraud*. Furthermore, we are asked to believe that *this fraud in dating went undetected until the present day!*

### A "Pseudo-Ezekiel"?

Now let's consider the problem that this imaginary, "pseudo-Ezekiel" would face in getting his spurious book accepted as the work of an original Ezekiel and then have it accepted as Scripture.

During the time of the Babylonian captivity there was a recognized religious authority among the Jewish

people. Ezekiel refers to them as the “elders of Judah” (Ezek. 8:1).

Later, when Cyrus decided to give permission for the Temple to be rebuilt, “Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the *priests*, and the *Levites* . . . to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5). The leaders of this expedition were Zerubbabel the *governor* and Joshua the *high priest*.

A little later, about 457 B.C., Ezra comes to the Holy Land. Ezra is called “a ready scribe in the *law of Moses*, which the Lord God of Israel *had given*” (Ezra 7:6). “Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (verse 10). Notice that Ezra was not a *lawgiver*, but a *scribe* — a copier — of an already existing code of law.

Throughout Ezra and Nehemiah, it is quite obvious that there is a *ruling body of Jews* concerned with ecclesiastical affairs and that there is a “holy scripture” — an *authoritative* body of religious writings (see Neh. 8:1).

There can be no question that this “law of Moses” was the *Torah* — the first five books of your Old Testament. Remember this was *before* 400 B.C.

Now back to the mischievous plot of “pseudo-Ezekiel.” He would have had the rather formidable task of palming off on a group of Jewish *priests*, *Levites*, and *governors*, a totally *new* book which none of them had ever heard of before — and convince them that it was written during the Babylonian captivity. Quite an assignment!

The Jewish people have always been an intelligent, practical people with a great deal of common sense. Would they have accepted a book purporting to have foretold, *in advance*, the history of the last few years, yet which did not appear until after the event?

Would you have accepted such a book?

Suppose some individual would try to convince you that he has found a book listing in detail all the major events of 1967-1969 — and that the book was published in 1944! Would you immediately accept this would-be prophet?

Wouldn't it seem just a little bit contrived?



When one comprehends the exalted position of the Torah among the Jewish people past and present, the obstacles that a "pseudo-Ezekiel" would face become absolutely insurmountable.

### Why Was Ezekiel Accepted?

Why then were Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue (the assemblage of priests and Levites constituting the religious authority) willing to accept the *real* Ezekiel at all? The answer becomes obvious when we understand that the Canon of the Old Testament — that is, the books making up the Old Testament — was complete by the end of the fifth century B.C. Ezra and the Jews with him in Babylon were aware of the prophetic work of Ezekiel when they returned.

Ezekiel had been part of the succession of prophets: He had held an office which was honored and respected. A few of his prophecies had *already* begun to come to pass. And these prophecies continued to be fulfilled before the Jews' very eyes — *while the book was in their very possession*. Nobody could question the authenticity of the book.

Interestingly enough, even the critics have not been willing to call Ezekiel an out-and-out fraud. Their reason is obvious: *Frauds have ulterior motives*. And any ulterior motive would have been transparent throughout. But no such motive can be found in Ezekiel. And no fraud writes like Ezekiel writes.

*Ezekiel rings true*. Literature with such a powerful moral force simply *does not arise from a hypocritical mind*.

Finally, since both Jewish tradition and the Jewish historian Josephus state that the Old Testament was completed about the end of the fifth century B.C., there can be no question of a later date for Ezekiel.

Absolutely the only claim that can be seriously advanced to question Ezekiel's own date is the fact that NO MAN could have made the prophecies that Ezekiel made. This, however, is not evidence for a later date. It is PROOF OF A DIVINE ORIGIN!

### Future Prophecies

Next, we offer only a slightly more complex *logical system* — a four-step process for the evaluation of *future* Biblical prophecies:

1) Understand that God reveals prophecy through his true servants.

2) Learn the *keys* of Bible prophecy.

3) Read the prophecies in your Bible.

4) Read the fulfillments in your newspaper — watch the fulfillments on television.

As we did for PAST PROPHECIES, we again explain in more detail.

First, Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth His secret unto his servants the prophets.”

Remember, ONLY God’s true servants have come to properly understand prophecy. Others try — by the thousands of hours of preaching and by the tons of printed material. But all for nothing.

God’s true disciples in *this* age will be shown “the things to come” by God’s Holy Spirit (John 16:13) — given to them because they believe in, preach and *obey* God (Acts 5:32). These individuals have a “good understanding” because they keep God’s Commandments to *DO them* (Psalm 111:10; Rev. 22:7, 14). Wherever you can find a “Work of God” that fulfills these conditions — which keeps God’s Commandments — there you will also find God revealing His secrets — which means opening up Bible prophecies for the practical understanding of future events.

Second, in order to enable these ancient and divine prophecies *to be opened*, we do in fact need certain “keys.” We must know *about whom* and *to whom* the many prophecies are speaking; we must know the *modern identities* of the peoples being referred to — in terms of *today’s* world and in terms of the basic geography of the 1970’s.

These keys are available!

How can the major nations be identified and then “tracked” in Bible prophecy?

Again, you need to study our free book, *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, to find out.

Third, once learning these basic keys to Bible understanding, the next step is easy: *Read* what these prophecies say. But please, no interpretation — of *any* kind. We have said over and over again: “The Bible interprets itself.” Just read what the words themselves say. Of course God allows you to decide whether or not you want to *believe* them. That’s your prerogative. (But your decision will not alter the prophecies which will come to pass *on schedule*.)

Fully one third of the entire Bible is prophecy — and about 90% of that one third is directly concerned with events in the coming decades, the '70's and '80's.

Fourth, and finally, you must “WATCH.” Christ said to *watch* in Luke 21:36 when discussing how *we* — those of us who are alive in the 1970's — can comprehend *beforehand* the events leading up to the end of man's age and the beginning of God's Age.

And “watch” means *watch world news*. Read a major daily newspaper. Subscribe to a reputable weekly news magazine. *Watch* one of the three television network news programs.

But don't just watch *passively*. That's not really watching!

Begin to think *actively*. And *creatively*. Correlate what you have read in the Bible with the *end result* of the specific happenings of the day, week, month and year. Discern the underlying *principle* involved. Don't expect every event in March 1974, for example, to be mentioned in the Bible. But do expect the *trends* to be there. Carry these trends forward to their conclusions. And expect these conclusions to be in the Bible also.

But a word of caution. Many conclusions and many trends are not all that apparent to even the most astute geopolitical observer. There will be surprises — radical twists of events. The prophecies of the Bible are literally astounding. What might *seem* at the moment to be a logical conclusion to a given situation in world affairs can

often be almost the opposite from what God has pre-determined. Witness the Six-day War in June of 1967.

Consequently, you need to know *what* to watch for. And there is only one way to know. A person has to be conversant with the Bible. He has to know the overall framework of Bible prophecy (point *three*), he must be aware of the identity of today's major nations (point *two*), and he must know where God is presently enabling obedient minds to comprehend prophecy (point *one*). Only by diligently applying these first three points can an individual really accomplish point four — and *watch* effectively as is commanded in Luke 21:36.

The events that will literally shake this world in a very short time are today still largely ignored. True, the threats of pollution, crime and divorce nationally, and trade war, cold war and hot war internationally are finally being recognized. But there are military, economic, political, and religious situations and occurrences on the horizon of which not one political commentator or news analyst — outside of *this* Work — is aware. The world will be utterly stunned. And that is an absolute fact. But those who will have read the publications of Ambassador College will have at least been forewarned.

So you must keep your priorities straight.

Read your Bible.

Read *The PLAIN TRUTH*. Read our free book *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*.

*Know in advance* what will be happening.

Then find it in the news.

That's called "*watching*."

By the way, don't be overly disturbed when you consistently discover that the critical items in the news — the portentous events in the Middle East, the developing situation in Central Europe or the ominous trends within the United States — are all neatly tucked away on page six, sandwiched between advertisements for toothbrushes and tablecloths, while page one is filled with the local scandals and murders (for the third straight week). Don't be disturbed — remember most newspapers feed the masses

what they want to read. Newspapers don't "watch." We do. And *you* must.

And, recall the *third* point in our *logical system* — the one for evaluating the prophecies fulfilled in the past. We had to conclusively prove that the various scriptures had significantly *pre-dated* the historical event. We have *no* such point to prove with respect to the Bible prophecies (90%, remember) *that will be and are being fulfilled* in the 1970's and beyond. We have no need to counter any Bible critics. Everybody knows that the Bible was not written (or even edited) last year. And the events prophesied to occur have not yet occurred.

So the test is simple.

Wait.

Watch.

And see.

### What Prophecy Means to You!

Jesus Christ commissioned His Church to preach and publish the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all the world as a WITNESS (Matt. 28:18-20; Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). The Gospel is prophetic! It has to do with present-day world news, and the FUTURE of this whole earth!

The *whole meaning* of the Gospel is PROPHEPIC. Jesus Christ said: "*Watch* ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to *escape* all these things *that shall come to pass* [that are *prophesied* — that are to happen in the FUTURE], and to stand before the Son of man"! (Luke 21:36.)

And Bible prophecy is really coming alive in these "searing seventies"! The world's "hot spots" are spreading and this decade promises to be one of the most traumatic in man's experience! You need to watch world events as they unfold, daily fulfilling the many intricate and specific prophecies relating to this pulsating twentieth century!

Yes, you need to come to UNDERSTAND prophecy! Only by understanding the *prophecies* of the Bible can you intelligently WATCH — and Jesus meant watch *world*



*news*. When you KNOW, *in advance*, what is GOING to happen — then you can be a real watchman of Almighty God!

### Spiritual Qualifications Necessary Too

But, realize there is also a spiritual ingredient involved in intelligently watching world news and correctly understanding Biblical prophecy.

Let's understand what it is.

God told Daniel the words which he had received were *closed* and *sealed* — but only UNTIL a certain time. Read it! "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and *sealed* TILL the *time of the end*. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the WISE SHALL UNDERSTAND" (Dan. 12:9-10).

Who are the "wise"? God says, "The *fear of the Eternal* is the BEGINNING of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Wisdom comes from God! "For the Eternal giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:6).

The way to get wisdom — to come to *understand* the Bible prophecies — is to FEAR (be in *awe* of) Almighty God! "Thus saith the Eternal, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Eternal: but to *this man* will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and TREMBLETH at my word"! (Isa. 66:1, 2.)

The mere BEGINNING of wisdom is to fear God. Next, one must learn to respect, to fear, to TREMBLE before the divinely inspired *word of Almighty God!*

Today people say, "Well, I know the Bible says that — but here's the way *I* look at it!" People do not seem to really *fear* to misapply, to misinterpret, wrest, distort and twist the sacred word of God! People do not really RESPECT the divinely inspired words of Almighty God!

That's why many people don't understand the Bible! You can come to understand the Bible, and Biblical

prophecy, ONLY when you begin to really FEAR and RESPECT *what the Bible says!*

The Apostle Paul said, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: NEITHER CAN HE KNOW THEM, *because they are spiritually discerned*" (I Cor. 2:14). The disciples of Jesus Christ couldn't even understand the simplest parables which Jesus taught them privately! However, AFTER they had been *converted*, after they had received the Holy Spirit of God, then they UNDERSTOOD!

It is only when one has been truly converted, has come to fear God, to OBEY God, has REPENTED, and received God's Holy Spirit, that true *understanding* of the prophecies of God can come. (Write for our free booklet *What Is a Real Christian?*)

So, STUDY YOUR BIBLE — PRAY for God to give you an obedient, humble, submissive mind — giving you more and more a deep, respectful AWE of the Word of God! You can't afford NOT to — your very *life* — your FUTURE is at stake!

## ADDITIONAL READING

Don't forget to write for the following free publications mentioned in this booklet. They are:

*The United States and British Commonwealth  
in Prophecy*

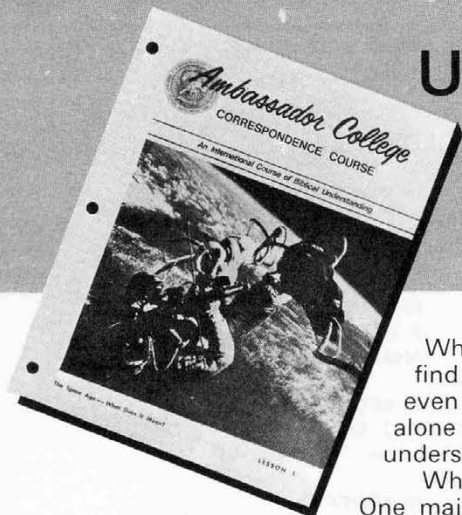
*The Wonderful World Tomorrow —  
What It Will Be Like*

*What Is a Real Christian?*

## **The PLAIN TRUTH Magazine**

If you are not yet a subscriber to the world's most unique news and human-experience magazine, *The PLAIN TRUTH*, be sure to request a free subscription. This magazine includes Bible-based articles preaching the true gospel.

# UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE



When you read the Bible, do you find it *difficult* to understand — even CONFUSING? You're not alone if you do. Most people do not understand the Bible today!

Why?

One major reason is because not *all* the truth on any one subject is found in any one place in the Bible. To properly UNDERSTAND the Word of God, you must put together ALL the scriptures on a particular subject. "Here a little, and there a little"! (Isa. 28:10, 13.) And only when all the scriptures are put together can you *really* see what the Bible says.

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