**Uncovering a 2,500 year old time capsule**

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AMERICA'S BICENTENNIAL in 1976 saw dozens of time capsules buried in virtually every state across the nation.

A time capsule is a metallic container into which records and mementos of one generation are placed for safekeeping, later to be opened and studied by a succeeding generation anxious to know how it was "back then."

Magazines, newspapers, coins and currency, tape recordings, articles of clothing, photographs and other items of contemporary society are carefully selected and lodged inside the capsule. The capsule is then sealed. Finally it is buried, never to see the light of day until, at the proper future time, it is dug up and its seal broken — 100 years, 500 years or even 1,000 years hence.

**Momentous Find!**

Few realize that in recent times a 2,500-year-old time capsule has been uncovered and opened to view! It was not unearthed by the spade of an archaeologist along the Euphrates River. Nor was it discovered in the tomb of an ancient Egyptian pharaoh. It was, in fact, never physically lost to begin with!

The identity of that time capsule? Bible prophecy!

Few realize that a significant portion of the Bible is, in effect, a time capsule. But a truly unique type of time capsule!

Nearly one third of the Bible consists of prophecy. The majority of those ancient prophecies are yet unfulfilled!

Notice, as an illustration, the instructions given long ago to the prophet Daniel regarding the prophecies he had received from God:

"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end . . ." (Daniel 12:4).

Daniel's prophecies were to be sealed from human understanding until the end times, the last days of this present human civilization. The actual words, of course, would remain through the centuries for all to see, but men's eyes would be blinded to their true meaning and intent.

Even Daniel himself did not fully understand the prophecies he had recorded. He was simply told: "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). When that future time finally arrived, however, then "the wise [would] understand" (verse 10).

The vast majority of the prophecies of the Bible were sealed and shut up, like a time capsule, for the last days.

Those days are now!

The prophetic biblical time capsules are now open for full view. Moreover, the messages contained therein are not just dusty records of past events and forgotten civilizations — but vivid pictures of things to come, events just ahead!

**Time Setting**

Let us see the works of just one of the many prophets of the Bible, the prophet Ezekiel. Let us see the proof that these prophecies were not intended — as most theologians and Bible scholars contend — simply for the peoples of Ezekiel's time, the 6th century B.C. We shall discover that these living prophecies are instead vitally important messages for today — the latter 20th century!

Few understand this vital truth. And few today are heeding Ezekiel's warnings. Yet no message is more timely or more urgent.

To begin, it is imperative to properly understand the time setting of Ezekiel's prophecy. It is one of the vital keys unlocking a true understanding of the message and intent of the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel leaves nothing to the imagination. The time factor is spelled out in unmistakable detail in Ezekiel 1:1-2. Ezekiel records that his first vision occurred in the fifth year of the captivity of king Jehoiachin of the ancient nation of Judah.

Remember, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had besieged Jerusalem on more than one occasion during the reign of Jehoiachin's predecessor, King Jehoakim. Nebuchadnezzar had taken many captives back to Babylon. Among them had been a young man named Daniel. That captivity is recounted in II Kings 24:17.

Later, King Jehoiachin was taken into captivity by the armies of Babylon. The record of Jehoiachin's captivity can be read in II Kings 24:10-16. It was in that captivity that Ezekiel was taken prisoner.

It was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity (594-593 B.C.) that Ezekiel experienced his first vision. This was still six years before the final Babylonian assault against Jerusalem, which resulted in the destruction of the city and the Temple (II Kings 25).

**Ezekiel's Commission**

Next notice to whom Ezekiel was sent with his messages. His commission is very clearly spelled out.

In Ezekiel 3:1, God commands Ezekiel: ". . . go speak unto the house of Israel." Ezekiel is called "a watchman unto the house of Israel" (3:17; 33:7).

Anciently, the 12 tribe nation of Israel had split into two separate nations after the death of King Solomon. The account of that break is found in I Kings 12.

The southern nation, with capital at Jerusalem, subsequently became known as the house of Judah. The people of the house of Judah became known as Jews.

The northern nation, with capital at Samaria, was called the house of Israel. It consisted of 10 tribes, headed by Ephraim and Manasseh. Those two leading tribes were descended from Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob (see Genesis 46:20).

Now notice the following fact: the northern, 10 tribe house of Israel had been conquered and carried away into national captivity by the armies of Assyria (II Kings 18:9-12) 130 years before Ezekiel began to prophesy! Yet it was to the house of Israel that Ezekiel was sent!

Consider further: Ezekiel himself was now also in captivity! He was among the Jewish captives by the river Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans (1:1, 3). Chebar was a great canal southeast of Babylon. The 10 tribes of Israel, on the other hand, had been carried over a century before, not to the land of Chaldaea, but to the lands of the Medes to the northeast.

Now the crucial point: Ezekiel was never released to seek out the house of Israel and deliver his message to it. He never reached the 10 tribes! Read the entire book and see for yourself. Tradition has it that Ezekiel was ultimately murdered by fellow exiles after rebuking them for idolatry.

The conclusion is therefore inescapable!

Ezekiel's prophecies were meant for a future time, and a different nation than Judah! He never went to the house of Israel or to the smaller neighboring nations to whom his prophecies were directed. Instead, he wrote the prophecies among Jewish captives — to be preserved by them until the time for which they were intended.

That time is now!

**Who Is Modern Israel?**

Ezekiel's prophecies never reached the ears of the nations for which they were intended. They are primarily meant for the house of Israel today.

But where is the house of Israel in this latter half of the 20th century? It is not in Palestine. The modern-day state of Israel is a Jewish nation — composed of descendants of the ancient house of Judah.

The captives of the 10 tribe house of Israel, on the other hand, never returned to the Holy Land, except for one priestly family (II Kings 17:27). The 10 tribes became known as the "Lost Ten Tribes." Few understand what became of them.

Longtime readers of The Plain Truth know that these 10 Israelitish tribes ultimately migrated northwestward into Western Europe. Some remained there. A large group later arrived in the British Isles in the mid-fifth century A.D. We know them as Anglo-Saxons. From there many later journeyed to North America and to Britain's colonies around the world.

The amazing truth is that Ephraim and Manasseh — the leading tribes of the house of Israel — are, respectively, Britain and the United States today! It was upon Ephraim and Manasseh that the patriarch Israel (Jacob) placed his name and to whom the birthright of national greatness and wealth was bestowed (Genesis 48). The Messiah, by contrast, was to descend from Judah.

The ancient prophecies of Ezekiel are thus essentially prophecies for the British and American peoples of today! (For proof of this vital truth, request your free copy of The United States and Britain in Prophecy by Herbert W. Armstrong)

Now, after more than 2,500 years, these prophecies of Ezekiel are being proclaimed to the ears of those for whom they were intended — the modern descendants of the ancient house of Israel!

**Watchman to the House of Israel**

Notice, now, God's warning to Ezekiel:

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman [guard or sentry] unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand" (Ezekiel 3:17-18).

Ezekiel was given an awesome responsibility. Had he failed to properly execute his commission of warning the people of the house of Israel, God would have held him ultimately responsible for their deaths!

God always gives ample warnings before meting out corrective punishment. God has promised that he will never dramatically intervene in world affairs without first revealing his intentions to his servants — who are then held responsible for warning the nations or peoples involved.”Surely the [Eternal] God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

After the warning is delivered, the watchman's job is finished. It is then up to the individual to decide whether he will personally act on that warning to avoid impending punishment.

Ezekiel took his commission seriously. Unable by circumstances to personally deliver the warning, he wrote it down — to preserve it through the centuries until it could be delivered.

You are now hearing that warning message! Ezekiel's message — along with the warnings and forecasts of other ancient prophets of God — are being broadcast daily around the world by way of "The World Tomorrow" radio program, and being read monthly in the pages of The Plain Truth. And the kings, presidents and prime ministers of this world are hearing them personally from Herbert W. Armstrong, editor in chief of The Plain Truth and apostle of Jesus Christ. Ezekiel's ancient commission is now being fulfilled!