

1. Can We Trust Bible Prophecy?

The 2nd Coming of Christ and End Times

In this first study, I would like to set the stage for this series. Biblical prophecies of Christ's return are given for our encouragement as the world becomes spiritually darker. I believe, now, more than ever, we need hope. We need to be reminded that our Lord knows the end from the beginning and that He is still on the throne and in control, regardless of events we see swirling around us. The Lord knows the past, present, and future, for He is the Great I Am. What I will be sharing with you are truths gathered over more than forty-four years. When we look at the topic of the Last Days and the Return of Christ, there are many interpretations and points of view, but we cannot set any dates for future events. After careful study of the Word of God and many studies on this topic, I will give you my point of view and interpretation, but we cannot be dogmatic on such things, and if you disagree, we can still be friends! The main point is that Jesus is coming soon. How soon? I don't know, but we see the stage being set for His coming.

I began a search in my late teens that took me to over thirty countries, which became a passion after a near-death experience. I found myself on death's doorstep due to some teenage stupidity. Hovering at the point of departure, I called out to God to spare my life. At that point in my life, I didn't really know or believe in God, but He had mercy on me and delivered me from death, regardless of my indifference to Him. Intrigued by my near-death experience (I was aware of my spirit leaving my body), I became very interested in the big questions of life, who I was, and what I was to do with my life—thoughts such as life after death, and the whole point of our existence. I wondered about the future of the world in which I was living. I had no idea where to look, as I was not yet a Christian and not even sure whether or not I believed there was a God. But I knew something was missing in my life, and I began searching for meaning and understanding. While on this search, I came across what many believe to be the prophetic gifting of Edgar Cayce, Jeanne Dixon and Nostradamus, and several others. I did not know it then, but I was looking in the wrong places, and God saw my searching heart and began revealing to me the truth.

Again and again, these so-called prophecies were so far off that they proved ridiculous. For instance, Edgar Cayce predicted that a secret underground chamber would be found in 1998 between the paws of the Sphinx in Egypt, as well as documents detailing the history of the mythical city of Atlantis. Another “prophetess” and astrologer, Jean Dixon, was reputed to have predicted the assassination of John F. Kennedy, but when one searches more diligently, the facts reveal a different story. In the May 1956 issue of Parade Magazine, she wrote that the presidential election in 1960 “would be dominated by labor and won by a Democrat,” who would then go on to “be assassinated or die in office though not necessarily in his first term.” She later admitted, “During the 1960 election, I saw Richard Nixon as the winner,” and at the time made clear predictions that JFK would fail to win the election. In the 1956 prophecy, she merely stated that a president would be “assassinated or die in office.” She acquired fame and notoriety by emphasizing a few coincidentally correct predictions and ignoring those that were wrong. What about the so-called prophet Nostradamus? He was widely held to be the world's best prophet, but he also got it wrong in many places. His writings are so obscure that anyone can read into them whatever they like. Writer Dennis McCallum brings us just one of his predictions:

The senseless ire of the furious combat will cause steel to be flashed at the table by brothers:
To part them death, wound, and curiously, the proud duel will come to France.

Surprisingly, this "prophecy," we are told, predicts the Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt and the assassination of Anwar Sadat. The "table" refers to the bargaining table. The "proud duel" refers to international terrorism. The "harm" to France refers to the destabilization in the Near East since the death of Sadat. After spending some time studying these so-called prophets, I finally came across the prophecies in the Bible. I was shocked to learn how much the Bible focuses on prophecy. As I searched through the Scriptures and Biblical prophecy, I was astounded to find the depth and detail of specific predictions so accurate that it convinced me that what I was reading was a book God had breathed on and protected down through the ages. I became convinced that God was shedding light on my pathway, leading me to the truth.

The Bible intrigued me but was a closed book to me until I wholeheartedly placed my trust in Christ in 1977. I believe the Bible to be a revelation of God to humanity about a Savior Who has come and will come again. The pieces of the jigsaw of life started falling into place and began to make sense. I assume that most of you reading this have come to that same place where you believe the Bible is God's Word. For those of you still searching for the truth, I hope that as we explore what the Bible has to say about the future, you, too, will conclude that the Scriptures provide answers and meaning for the world in which we live.

[Question: Do you believe that God speaks to people today, and if so, in what ways does He choose to communicate with us?](#)

Does God Know Everything Ahead of Time?

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come (Isaiah 46:10).

To understand this prophecy topic, we must explore the truth that God is omniscient. Omniscience is a fancy word to describe the fact that God knows everything. He is not bound by time in the same way that we are. The Lord knows everything that is happening, past, present, and future. There is nothing that God is in the dark about, and nothing surprises Him. This means He has perfect knowledge of all things that have happened, are happening right now, and all that will happen in the universe He has created. Not only does He possess complete knowledge of all the facts, but He also has a perfect understanding and interpretation of all things that happen or will happen. There is nothing that God does not know about you and the world in which we live. He knows everything you have ever done, are doing now, and everything you are going to do:

¹O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. ²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. ⁵You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain (Psalm 139:1-6).

The Test of Prophecy to False Gods

When the people of Israel were wandering far from God and worshipping nature deities (demons) in the form of idols, the Lord used the prophet Isaiah to speak to them about the nature of the one true God. To set Himself apart from other so-called deities, God said: “I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you” (Isaiah 42:8-9). To prove and authenticate that He alone is God, the Lord says He knows the future and tells us of events ahead of time. He says, "Before they spring into being I announce them to you."

He challenged the false gods and idols to do the same. Here, Isaiah is speaking on behalf of God, addressing the people’s belief in false idols. He issues a challenge to these false gods:

²¹“Present your case,” says the LORD. “Set forth your arguments,” says Jacob’s King.
²²“Tell us, you idols, what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, ²³tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear (Isaiah 41:21-23).

Even though the people in Isaiah’s day were looking to false idols, God patiently continued to communicate with them through His prophet. In the following passages, the Lord reminded them that He had made the truth known and told them that He will continue to make events known before they happen:

⁶“This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. ⁷Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let them foretell what will come. ⁸Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one” (Isaiah 44:6-8).

⁹Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please’ (Isaiah 46:9-10).

³I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. ⁴For I knew how stubborn you were; your neck muscles were iron, your forehead was bronze. ⁵Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, ‘My images brought them about; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.’ ⁶You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them? From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you. ⁷They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today. So you cannot say, ‘Yes, I knew of them’ (Isaiah 48:3-7).

God has purposed to unveil hidden things to humanity. He did this to convince Israel that He alone is God; there is no other!

In the above passage, the Lord tells us that He does not want us to be afraid. He also tells us we are His witnesses and that He knows the end from the beginning. How can these words help us as we live our daily lives and as we face the future?

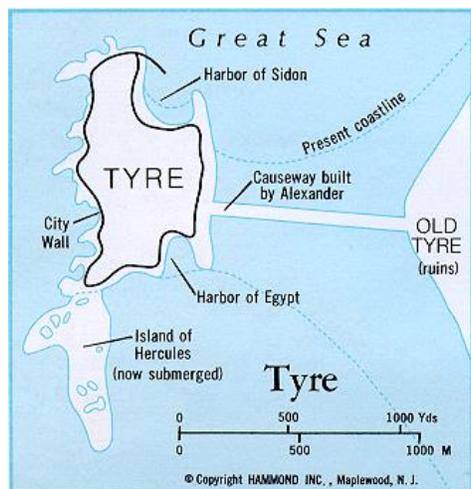
What Evidence is There of His Knowledge?

To prove that He alone is God, the Lord foretold many things in great detail that we may have evidence to trust His Word. One striking example is the prophecy concerning a city called Tyre. There were specific details in this prophecy given approximately 2600 years ago that came to pass remarkably. Let's examine how prophecy was fulfilled concerning this ancient city. You will be amazed if you take the time to consider how so many factors contributed to bringing these words to pass. I have chosen to highlight the story of Tyre, as it is an excellent illustration of God speaking words before they come to pass, which have been fulfilled and can be observed through history, up until the present day.

The Prophecy Concerning Tyre (Ezekiel 26).

Because the city of Tyre rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem, God said that he would also demolish the city of Tyre, the ruins of which are now in the present-day country of Lebanon. Here is the prophecy:

¹In the eleventh month of the twelfth year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, ‘Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper,’ ³therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves. ⁴They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. ⁵Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become plunder for the nations, ⁶and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD. ⁷“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,



king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army. ⁸He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp up to your walls and raise his shields against you. ⁹He will direct the blows of his

battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons. ¹⁰His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the warhorses, wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city whose

walls have been broken through. ¹¹The hooves of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground. ¹²They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea. ¹³I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more. ¹⁴I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD (Ezekiel 26:1-14).

What specific incidents do you see Ezekiel prophesying would happen to this city? Keep in mind that not a single event had taken place when the prophecy was written down.

- 1) Nebuchadnezzar would attack the city and capture it (v. 7, 10).
- 2) Many nations would come against the city and plunder it (v. 3-5).
- 3) There would be a siege on the city by Nebuchadnezzar (v. 8).
- 4) The stones, timber, and rubble of Tyre would be thrown into the sea.
- 5) The city would be a bare rock and a place for fishermen to spread their nets.
- 6) The city would never be rebuilt.

Seventeen years after this prophecy was given, Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, came against the mainland city. He was after the great treasure there—the city of Tyre was well known as a city that grew very prosperous by trading with other nations. Nebuchadnezzar was after finances to fund his army. When he arrived, the dust of his chariots and men covered the city. He used massive force, and with battering rams, he broke down the walls and captured the city. There was only one problem; ships had shifted most of the treasure to the two little islands half a mile from the land. Nebuchadnezzar and his army were furious but try as they might; they were unsuccessful in capturing the island fortress, partly because they had no ships. Nebuchadnezzar carried on down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Some would say that this left the prophecy partially unfulfilled, and for several years it was so until Alexander the Great came to Tyre on his conquest of the Persian Empire. He also attacked Tyre to get to the riches on the island off the coast; he built a causeway with the rubble left of the mainland city of Tyre. Alexander's men threw all the rubble of the city of Tyre into the sea to make the causeway. Alexander finally captured the city, and even today, there are pictures of the local fishermen spreading their nets on the bare rock of where the ancient city once stood. The causeway changed the way the tide ran past the island off the city's shore, making the old island city now underwater, just as Ezekiel prophesied.

A Jewish traveler in the 1100s named Benjamin of Tudela came to the old spot where Tyre once existed and wrote:

A man can ascend the walls of New Tyre and see ancient Tyre, which the sea has now covered, lying at a stone's throw from the new city. And should one care to go forth by boat, one can see the castles, marketplaces, streets, and palaces in the bed of the sea. New Tyre is a busy place of commerce, to which merchants flock from all quarters.
Benjamin of Tudela, *the Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*.

Prophecies Fulfilled in the First Coming of Christ.

The Old Testament is full of prophetic pictures of Jesus that confirm the accuracy of the Bible. The website, [Life, Hope and Truth](#) estimate that there are 2500 prophecies in the Scriptures. Many of which foretell the first coming of Christ, with many focusing on His second coming and yet to be fulfilled. Below are some of the Scriptures that prove the accuracy of the Bible and detail significant events in the life of Jesus that He could not fulfill by Himself. Read through the whole chapter of Isaiah 53 and meditate on the similarities that you find in describing events in the life of Christ. Here are some of the many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Christ:

1. The Messiah would be born of a virgin. Isaiah 7:14; Genesis 3:15. "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son."
2. The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Genesis 49:10. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah..."
3. Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2. "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."
4. The Messiah would be visited by wise men with gifts. Isaiah 60:3, 6-9. "Gentiles shall come...and kings."
5. The Son of God would be in Egypt for a time. Hosea 11:1. "Called my son out of Egypt."
6. King Herod murdered infants at Christ's birthplace in Bethlehem, where Rachel died. Jeremiah 31:15. "Rachel weeping for her children."
7. The Messiah's ministry would be preceded by a messenger (John the Baptist). Isaiah 40:3. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."
8. Christ's ministry would begin in Galilee. Isaiah 9:1: "Zebulun, & Naphtali...have seen a great light."
9. Messiah would perform miracles. Isaiah 35:5-6. "blind,..deaf,..lame, and dumb sing".
10. The Messiah would teach parables. Psalm 78:2. "I will open my mouth in a parable..."
11. He would Heal many. Isaiah 42:7,16; Matthew 8:16,17. "To open the blind eyes."
12. His miracles would not be believed. Isaiah 53:1. "Who hath believed our report?"
13. The Messiah would enter Jerusalem on a donkey. Zechariah 9:9. "thy King cometh...riding upon an ass."
14. A friend would betray Messiah for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah, the prophet in chapter 11, verses 12-13, wrote: "So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver."
15. The money gained by selling the Messiah would be used to buy a potter's field. Zechariah 11:13. "cast them to the potter."
16. The money would be thrown on the Temple floor. Zechariah 11:13. "And the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the handsome price at which they valued me! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter at the house of the Lord."
17. Forsaken by His disciples. Zechariah 13:7. "Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."
18. False witnesses would accuse Him. Psalm 35:11. "False witnesses did rise up."
19. He would be silent before His accusers. Isaiah 53:7. "He was oppressed... yet he opened not his mouth."
20. Messiah would be scourged and spat upon. Isaiah 50:6. "I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

21. The Messiah would be killed and planned to be buried between two thieves, but instead, He would be buried in a rich man's tomb. Isaiah 53:9. "And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.
22. The Messiah's side would be pierced. Zechariah 12:10. "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."
23. He would be given vinegar to drink. Psalm 69:21. "In my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink."
24. They would gamble for Christ's garments. Psalm 22:18. "They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my clothing."
25. They would not break His bones, even though the two thieves He was crucified with had their legs broken. Psalm 34:20. "He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken."
26. He would utter a forsaken cry: Psalm 22:1. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
27. Darkness would cover the land from noon. Amos 8:9. "I will darken the earth in the clear day."
28. Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. Psalm 22:16. "...they pierced my hands and my feet."
29. Christ would be raised from the dead. Psalm 16:10. "thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."
30. He would ascend to heaven. Psalm 68:18. "Thou hast ascended on high."
31. The Messiah would be rejected by His own people, Israel. Isaiah 53:3 "He is rejected of men... and we esteemed him not."
32. The Gentiles would believe in him. Isaiah 60:3. "Gentiles shall come to thy light."
33. The Messiah would come and be killed, then Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed (fulfilled in 70AD). Daniel 9:26. "shall Messiah be cut off... people...destroy the city and sanctuary."
34. The Messiah would offer Himself as Prince to Israel 173,880 days after 5th March 444BC. Daniel 9:26-27; Luke 19:41-44. "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to Messiah the Prince shall be 69 weeks (heptads=7x360 days)."

Jesus, the Prophet, Priest, and King

As the Messiah, Jesus is a Prophet and the destined soon-coming King of Kings. One of the many things He prophesied was the dispersion (Diaspora) of Israel because of their rejection of Him, when they said, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered (John 19:15). Jesus prophesied that He would not return until the nation was ready and willing to receive Him: ³⁸"Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you that you will not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 23:38-39). The Jewish people have been dispersed worldwide and suffered greatly at the hands of ungodly people, but the Lord said that He would return after a regathering spoken of in Ezekiel 37, a passage of Scripture known as the Valley of the Dry Bones prophecy. Psalm 102 also speaks of what will take place at the time of this regathering: "For the LORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory" (Psalm 102:16). Zion refers to the city of David, Jerusalem. This is what the people of God worldwide are looking for—the Lord to appear in His glory, and daily we watch as Jewish people are being brought back to the land in fulfillment of prophecy.

To those living in the early 1900s, it looked impossible for Israel ever to have their own nation again, but God overcame all impossibilities. On May 14, 1948, the nation of Israel again became one of the families of countries worldwide. A second impossibility overcome was that they could have their capital in Jerusalem. Still, in 1967, after six days of war against many nations, the Jewish nation recaptured the city of Jerusalem and the Holy places. One of the signs of the last days is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Jewish people returning to their land against all odds. Paul wrote that when the Jewish people would be restored to the land, there would be one flock and One Shepherd (John 10:16). The Lord will take away the veil that blinds their hearts and that a remnant would come to their Messiah, and it would like life from the dead to the Church (Romans 11:15).

When I first visited Israel in 1977, I think there were around four or five Messianic congregations; now, there are over 200. Conservative estimates currently tell us that there are approximately 30,000 Jewish believers in Yeshua (Jesus) in Israel. We live in a time when things are accelerating, and we see events fulfilled in our day, like restoring the Jewish people to their Messiah. These are challenging but exciting times as God watches over His Word to perform it! (Jeremiah 1:12). He does not break His promises.

When the Lord comes, He is coming to those who rejected Him, those in their capital city of Jerusalem. Zechariah 14:1-9 speaks of an attack on the city of Jerusalem when the Lord their God and all the holy ones will come and fight against those attacking Jerusalem and His people. The Lord's keeping of His Word has always been the case, but much more so today! We need to learn to trust Him daily.

As you can see, the Bible points to Christ throughout the Old and New Testaments. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning, and the End. In His wisdom, God has decided to reveal the future through the prophetic Scriptures. I don't believe God ever gives us unnecessary information. That which He chooses to disclose is for our good, to increase our faith and reassure us that He is aware of all things and in control of all things. Since God dwells outside of time, He wants us to know that no matter what happens, He holds the future and all of eternity. He is our God, the Rock.

Over the upcoming nine studies, we will look at detailed prophecies about events that precede the Second Coming of Christ. If God knew all these events that took place during the first coming of Christ, we can trust that He also knows ahead of time the events that will precede Christ's Second Coming—the most incredible event of all time.

To view more studies in the Second Coming of Christ series, click the following link:
<https://www.groupbiblestudy.com/eng-end-times>

Keith Thomas,
Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com
Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com