

# Predicting the Future

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**I**saiah the prophet lived in the 8th century B.C. and foretold events that have amazingly been fulfilled through the centuries of time. Some prophecies are yet to be fulfilled and one of these tells of a coming day when the world will *“reel to and fro like a drunkard”* (Isa.24:19). He states that it will occur just before *“the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem and before his ancients gloriously”* (Isa.24:23).

Many prophets of God have spoken of a similar time when there will be an environmental, economic, and political upheaval that has had no equal in the history of mankind. These prophecies agree in every minute detail though they were recorded centuries apart.

The Bible states that every prophecy by the prophets of God are only a part of the big picture that Almighty God has painted on the parchment of holy writ. Not one of these servants of God has marred the great prophetic landscape painted by the Divine artist. Each prophet took up the same brush and used the same oil to describe the scene on earth at the end of time. Peter stated:

*“No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For (because) 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”* (2Pet.1:20-21).

In other words, no prophecy was given in isolation because there were **many holy men of God** through the centuries of time who were directed by the Holy Spirit to add their touch to the canvas to give us the final picture. Each gave only a part of the story and for this reason many did not understand the full meaning of their own prophecies. Daniel said, *“I heard but I understood not”* and he was informed that *“the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end”* (Dan.12:8-9).

Even many of the prophecies that have already been fulfilled were a mystery until the appointed time. The first advent of Christ was foretold from the beginning of the human race and for four millennia men searched these prophecies and tried to interpret

them but until the fulness of time was come it was to no avail. Peter said:

*“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and **searched diligently**, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (1Pet.10-12).*

The last brush marks on the Divine parchment were added in A.D. 96 as the Apostle John completed the Book of the Revelation; called the Apocalypse or “last things”. A solemn warning was given in the closing verses of holy Scripture not to add anything to “*that which is perfect*” (1Cor.13:10; Rev.22:18). Paul recognized in his day that the Divine record was not complete. It was at that time, in part, but he stated that when the complete (perfect) revelation came men would see clearly God’s plan for themselves and the world.

When John wrote the final section of the inspired record the prophetic message given by the former prophets was brought together and the Lord Jesus opened the sealed book to reveal details of the earth’s future. We no longer see through a glass “darkly” or “obscurely, but clearly, as it were, “face to face” (1Cor.13:12).

Looking back through the pages of history we can trace the fulfilment of many prophecies such as:

1. The destruction of Samaria and Damascus by the Assyrians.
2. The Assyrian conquests and the destruction of their armies at Jerusalem followed by the assassination of King Sennacherib.
3. The Babylonian conquests including the destruction of Nineveh, Tyre, Jerusalem, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and the land of Egypt.
4. The overthrow of Babylon by Cyrus the Persian king and the favourable treatment of the Jewish captives in Babylon by the Persian kings; the rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem in the Persian era.

5. The fact that God would set His "*throne in Elam*" (Persia) which was fulfilled by Daniel, Zerubbabel, Esther, Mordecai, and Nehemiah.
6. The rise of Greece under the leadership of Alexander the Great and his untimely death. The fact that his empire would not go to his posterity but would be divided into four kingdoms ruled by others; by his generals.
7. Alexander's conquest against the island city of Tyre and his mercy on Jerusalem.
8. The many conflicts between the southern kingdom of the Egyptian Ptolomies and the northern kingdom of the Seleucids up to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes and his desolation of the Jews and their Temple were fulfilled in detail.
9. The rise of the Roman Empire which is to continue until the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom on earth. The global scattering of the Jews by the Romans in A.D.70 and their spiritual blindness until the last days.
10. The first Advent of Christ was foretold in detail:
  - a) John the Baptist would be born to announce Christ's coming
  - b) A virgin would give birth to Christ at Bethlehem and Herod would seek to slay Him. Mary and Joseph would take the child to Egypt.
  - c) Jesus would live at Nazareth in Galilee and His ministry would be centred there.
  - d) That Jesus would heal the sick and finally present Himself as Israel's King on a specific day; at Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.
  - e) Judas would betray the Lord for 30 pieces of silver and the disciples would desert Him. A potter's field would be purchased with the 30 pieces of silver and Judas would be replaced by another among the Apostles.
  - f) Christ would be despised by the nation, rejected, and given to the Gentile authorities to be mocked, scourged, and crucified. Men would gamble for His clothing and He would be offered vinegar while on the cross.

g) Christ would rise from the dead and lead all the Old Testament saints to glory.

11. The Jews would return to the land in unbelief before the end of the age as fulfilled in May 1948.

These are just some of the prophecies that have already been fulfilled in minute detail but they were obscure until the time of their fulfilment. There are no new prophecies to be added for Divine revelation is complete. The Church age is the time of Gentile testimony and all prophets are Jews; there are no Gentile prophets for *"unto them (Jews) were committed the oracles (utterances) of God"* (Rom.3:2).

As we look into the future there are many prophecies that will soon be fulfilled. We know this because the re-establishment of the nation of Israel has already become a reality and this is linked to related prophecies yet to be fulfilled. Israel's present restoration is only partial while she continues to reject Messiah.

Over the centuries since Christ's first advent, men have searched the many future prophecies. They have thought that the events of their time were in some way a fulfilment of the prophecies. For instance, people have been trying to identify the Antichrist ever since the early Church era and sometimes history has been used to interpret the Bible instead of the Bible interpreting history. They have not realized that local wars and disturbances were only *"wars and rumours of wars"* but that Jesus said, *"all these things must come to pass, but the end is NOT YET"* (Matt.24:6).

When the disciples asked the Lord if He would *"at THIS TIME restore again the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:6), Jesus made it clear that time must elapse and in the meanwhile they were to preach the Gospel in all the world during the Church age.

When the Pharisees *"demanded of him when the kingdom should appear"* Jesus replied, *"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation"* or, **not in the "near view"** (Luke 17:20). He then told the disciples that they would desire to see the kingdom *"and ye shall not see it"* (Luke17:22).

There must be a time lapse after Pentecost in which the Church is called out from the Gentile nations and Israel blinded and scattered

among the nations. Only after these events are fulfilled will the prophecies of the last days run their course.

This is why the return of Israel to the land in 1948 is so important because it signals the beginning of the closing chapter of history before Christ returns.

Theologians have spiritualized the literal prophecies. They cannot deny that prophecies of Christ's first advent were literal but their unbelieving hearts have not been "*fully persuaded*" concerning Christ's second advent. They refuse to believe that "*what he had promised, he was able also to perform*" (Rom.4:21) - literally.

Some have used mathematical devices to find mysterious hidden meanings. The year-day theory is an example of this. It has led the Seventh Day Adventists into their blasphemous "doctrine of the sanctuary" which teaches that, since 1844, Christ has been cleansing heaven of the sins of Christians and is now examining their record to see who is worthy of the first resurrection!

Some, such as the Preterists have even gone so far as to teach that Christ returned in A.D.70 and that the kingdom is already here in a spiritual sense while the Amillennialists have denied that there will ever be a literal earthly kingdom of Christ.

If God **literally** fulfilled all of the prophecies concerning the nations in the Old Testament and all the prophecies of Christ's first advent, then by any reasonable measure we must accept that the promises to Israel and the world concerning the last days must **also be fulfilled literally**. When Isaiah wrote that just prior to the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth, the "*earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard*" (Isa.24:20) and that "*it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth*" (Isa.24:21), in all honesty, we must believe **it will literally be fulfilled**.

Since 1948 the signs have been clear. Israel is back in the land in unbelief. The dry bones have come together and sinews are on the bones (Ezek.37). The next stage will be fulfilled when Israel repents of her rejection of Messiah and God breathes His Spirit into the nation. This however, will occur in the Great Tribulation when the "*northern army*" (Joel 2:20) of Russia, Iran, Turkey, Libya and

Sudan unite to enter the land. Preparations for this invasion are advancing but the Rapture of the Church must come first. Jesus said to His Jewish disciples:

*“When these things BEGIN to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh”* (Luke 21:28).

If this is true for Israel in the Tribulation it is also true for the Church as *“we see the day approaching”* (Heb.10:25).

### ***Dispensational Teaching***

One of the greatest safeguards to interpreting Bible prophecy is to recognize the dispensations, or administrations, that God chose to use at various stages of the history of mankind. It is an undeniable fact that God progressively developed His administration of mankind over the centuries of time to meet the situations that occurred. There are seven different periods of administration since Adam was created:

- 1) The Age of innocence in the Garden of Eden.
- 2) The Age of Conscience after man received the knowledge of good and evil and was cast out of Eden. This continued until the Flood.
- 3) The Age of Human Government from the Flood to the call of Abraham.
- 4) The Age of Promise from Abraham to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. God chose a family.
- 5) The Age of Law from the Exodus of Israel from Egypt to Christ’s ascension and the day of Pentecost.
- 6) The Church Age from Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church at the end of the age.
- 7) The Millennial Kingdom after the departure of the Church and the conversion of Israel in the Tribulation.

In addition it is essential to distinguish between the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church if we are to *“rightly divide the word of truth”*.

Much error has arisen from interpretations of the parables because it has not been recognized that they were spoke to Israel in the last days of the Age of Law and not to the Church. The Church began at Pentecost and the epistles provide church truth.