

STUDY ONE – THE BIBLE UNVEILS THE FUTURE!

INTRODUCTION

History tells us something unique about the human race: We have a great hunger to know what the future holds. Traditionally we have sought this knowledge by spiritual means that bypass our reason or capability, means such as astrology, pronouncements from oracles, fortune-telling and various forms of mysticism. These attempts have proved elusive and deceptive.

In recent times we have turned to more sophisticated and scientific ways to feed our craving. Experts in various fields—physics, sociology, economics, even population demographics and food production and weather prognostication—have conducted countless studies to shed light on the days to come. The results of these works, though thought-provoking and helpful, nevertheless simply verify the fact that no human mind or system can foresee the many contingencies that affect future events. For this reason, none of these studies can be accepted as fully reliable.

There remains, however, a third source to which we may look for revelation about the future. This third source is faultless in its reliability. It is the Bible, and within its pages lie the prophetic insights we seek. Only the Word of God can satisfy our longing to see into the future.

First and foremost, we must understand that the Bible offers light to those who study it and obey it. A number of Scriptures make this point, including the familiar words of the psalmist to the Lord: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). To have forward mobility, we generally require feet to walk with and a path to walk on. But to move forward with confidence, it helps to see where we are going. God’s Word provides light for our feet and light for our path. In other words, the Bible shows us where to step next. It may not always show us a long way ahead, but we are never left to walk in darkness. What a tremendous blessing that is! If we study and obey the Bible, we will never be left walking in darkness.

God Reveals the Future

Throughout the Bible, God claims to foretell the future within its pages. Look at these passages from the book of Isaiah.

“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God. And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people. and the things that are coming and shall come, let them show these to them.” (Isaiah 44:6-7)

The Lord presents a challenge here: “I am God. I know what happened in the past; I know what will happen in the future. If anybody repudiates this, let him come forth with the same breadth of factual information that I offer.” Then in the next verse, God says to His people: “Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed, there is no other Rock; I know not one.” (v8)

Those who do make claims of predictions through “alternative” sources of information are easily shown to be impostors. To the astrologers, fortune-tellers and soothsayers—of whom there were multitudes in biblical days, just as there are today—the Lord says this:

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“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: “I am the LORD, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, and drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolishness; Who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers...” (Isaiah 44:24-26)

When God’s servants predict, God stands behind what they say and sees that it happens. But when false prophets predict, God turns their words upside down and makes them look foolish. Only God’s Word will stand—His purpose alone is the one that will be worked out. Almighty God is speaking in these verses, the One who created the heavens, created the earth, created mankind and all things. He is in full control of all that He brought into being.

“Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isaiah 46:9-10)

If we believe God alone can reveal the future, it follows that we must gain a right appreciation of His sovereignty, majesty and justice. God never makes mistakes. Everything He does is right. We may have gone through situations that left us wondering if He was being unfair, but that is impossible. God is always just and always right.

Proof That His Prophecies Are True

If we have any further doubts about God’s ability or plan to reveal the future to us through the Bible, we need only look at His record. Given below are two prominent examples: predictions made concerning the life of Jesus and the nation of Israel. These are just a handful of the many predictions made thousands of years ago that have been and are still being accurately fulfilled in every detail.

The Life of Jesus Christ

Words spoken through God’s prophets, as recorded in the Old Testament, foretold every significant event in the life of Jesus in accurate detail. When each one of these prophecies came true, the Bible says that it happened “that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Here are eighteen specific events in the life of Jesus as predicted in the Old Testament and shown to be fulfilled in the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ life.

- His birth of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:24–25).
- His birth at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4–7).
- His flight into Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15).
- His being anointed by the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 3:16).
- His ministry in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1–2; Matthew 4:15–16).
- His healing of the sick (Isaiah 61:1; John 5:1–9).
- His use of parables (Psalm 78:2; Matthew 13:34–35).
- His being betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18).
- His being forsaken by His disciples (Psalm 88:8; Mark 14:50).
- His being hated without a cause (Psalm 35:19; John 15:25).
- His being rejected by the Jews (Isaiah 53:3; John 1:11).
- His being condemned with criminals (Isaiah 53:12; Luke 22:37).
- His garments being parted and divided by lot (Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35).
- His being offered vinegar for His thirst (Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:48).
- His body being pierced without His bones being broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:36; also Zechariah 12:10; John 19:37).

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- His being buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57–60).
- His rising from the dead on the third day (Hosea 6:2; Luke 24:46).

Scripture is unerring in all these points concerning the life of Jesus.

The History of the Nation of Israel

Our second example of biblical prophecy involves the history of the nation of Israel. Again, the examples are far too numerous to list here but suffice it to say that the Bible has predicted the course of Israel's history accurately for the past 3,500 years. Here are a few specific aspects of Israel's history predicted in the Bible long before they occurred:

- Enslavement in Egypt (Genesis 15:13).
- Deliverance with wealth from Egypt (Genesis 15:14).
- Possession of the land of Canaan (Genesis 15:18–20).
- Turning to idolatry there (Deuteronomy 32:15–21).
- Center of worship in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 12:5–6; Psalm 132:13–14).
- Assyrian captivity (Amos 5:27; 6:14; 7:17).
- Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 16:13; 21:10).
- Destruction of the first Temple (2 Chronicles 7:19–22).
- Return from Babylon (Isaiah 6:11–13; 48:20).
- Destruction of the second Temple (Matthew 24:2; Luke 19:43–44).
- Scattered among all nations (Leviticus 26:33–34; Ezekiel 12:15).
- Persecution and oppression (Leviticus 26:36–39).
- Regathering from all nations (Isaiah 11:11–12; Zechariah 10:9–10).

Here are a few predictions yet unfulfilled:

- All nations against Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:2–3; 14:1–2).
- Supernatural revelation of Messiah (Zechariah 12:10–14).
- Messiah comes in glory (Zechariah 14:3–5).

Considering the Bible's proven record, we can turn to it confidently as our source for information about events still in the future. Remember, if we study and obey the Bible, we do not need to walk in darkness.

Giving Heed to Biblical Prophecy

This leaves us with one final question as we begin our study of end time prophecy in the Bible. What is the ultimate purpose? Why would God give us a book that tells us what is going to happen in the future? ***All of the prophecies throughout Scripture that have yet to occur have one central mission: to make us aware of the coming of the Lord as an imminent reality.***

Let's look at just one verse from the second epistle of Peter. Peter has been writing about the revelation he and two other apostles had of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration when they saw the honor and glory God the Father had bestowed upon Jesus. Then he relates that there is something even more important: *“So we have the prophetic word made more certain. You do well to pay [close] attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and light breaks through the gloom and the morning star arises in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:19 AMP).*

Peter is saying, in effect, “That revelation we had on the Mount of Transfiguration was wonderful. It was valid, and it is recorded now in Scripture. But there is something much more certain: It is the prophetic word of Scripture, the written prophecies of the Bible.”

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We need to give heed to the prophetic word “until the day dawns and the morning star rises in [our] hearts.” Peter is not talking about what is happening in the world; he is talking about what is happening in our hearts. Even if a person is a believer—saved, baptized in the Spirit and destined for heaven—that one will be walking in darkness here on earth if he ignores the light God has provided. Walking in darkness does not mean we will be refused entry into heaven when we die. But it does mean we will be stumbling and groping while here on earth, not understanding what is going on, fearful and confused.

As Hebrews 9:28 tells us, Jesus is going to appear for those who wait for Him eagerly. Are we waiting for Him eagerly? If the morning star has risen in our hearts, then we will be waiting for Him with great anticipation, and He will appear to us the second time.

Let us, then, turn to God’s prophetic guidance about the end times. There is a great deal that He wants to tell us about these days in which we are beginning to see the glow of the morning star.