

Today and Tomorrow in Prophecy

“No prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.”
—II Peter 1:20,21,
New Living Translation

ONE OF AMERICA’S LEAD-ing businessmen once said: “Unfortunately, there is no such thing as future certainty.” If it has to do with the future of business, the economy, politics, and the social fabric of our society, that statement is certainly true. Generally speaking, every aspect of the present world in which we live seems to be uncertain. However, for the sincere student of the Bible,

this does not hold true, because the Word of God gives us definite assurance as to what the future holds for us, our children, and all mankind.

God sent his faithful servants to tell us what we could expect regarding the future of the human race, and their predictions were inspired by him. In

II Peter 1:19, the apostle makes this statement: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” He then, in our opening text, confirms for us the fact that prophecy does not come from the prophet himself, but it comes directly from God, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The foregoing Scripture says that prophecy is like a light shining in a dark place, and how true that is. Darkness, confusion, and perplexity cover the earth today. Many people, perhaps the majority, do not know or believe that the great God of the universe has a plan for his creation, and for the future of the human race. However, just as a lantern aids to show the way in the dark, so prophecy, and its many related promises, are as a light shining in a dark place.

HISTORY IN ADVANCE

Prophecy is history written in advance, and only God can do this; but when he does so, it is sure. Thus, the Apostle Peter says that we have something upon which we can depend—a sure Word of prophecy—that to which we do well to “take heed.” Very few do this today. Many have rejected the Bible. Some say that God is dead, or that he does not exist. Some claim to be wise in themselves, and this often becomes a snare to them, when such wisdom fails to bring about its desired results. Such being the case, the wisdom of this world often turns into blindness, and because of this mankind is in perplexity and fear as to what the future holds for them and their children.

Many have believed that they could bring in the Golden Age of peace on earth and good will toward men without there having been born “in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11) We believe that to have such a view surely leads to sad disappointment. The Bible says that “the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.” (Isa. 29:14) Think of the efforts that have been made by sincere and conscientious people to bring about an ideal society in this world and ask yourself whether or not the wisdom of their “wise men” has perished, and the knowledge of their “prudent men” has been hidden.

FULFILLED PROPHECIES

Let us first look at some Bible prophecies that have already been fulfilled, and from them judge whether their words concerning the future are accurate and dependable. Thinking back to the Garden of Eden, recall that upon his betrayal of our first parents, Satan was addressed by God, who said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:15) This is the first prophecy recorded in the Bible, and it has to do with the hope of a “seed,” that is, a Redeemer or Savior, who would help fallen humanity. Though in veiled language, it was a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ.

We recall that later on, though still hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophets of God said he would be born of a woman. Isaiah 7:14 says, “The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a

virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” That prophecy was fulfilled; Jesus, the seed of the woman, came in fulfilment of that prophecy.

It did not stop there. In Micah 5:2 we read another prophecy: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Bethlehem was to be the birthplace of this seed who would be born of a virgin. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born God’s prophets spoke of these details. Do we think that Mary, the virgin mother, or other individuals, could have shaped the accomplishment and circumstances of Jesus’ birth short of the divine fulfilment of these prophecies? Certainly not.

There are many more events in the life of Jesus that were prophesied. The death that he should die was one; the drink that he was given while upon the cross was another. The sepulcher of the rich man in which he was entombed was also foretold. (Isa. 53:3,4,9; Ps. 69:21) Could man have shaped the outcome of these prophecies? The length of time Jesus was to be in the tomb was foretold; his resurrection from the dead was prophesied, and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—all these things were predicted and fulfilled, and all were beyond human collusion.—Jonah 1:17; Matt. 12:40; Isa. 53:10-12; Ps. 16:10; Joel 2:28,29

That all of these prophecies were fulfilled in the life of one perfect man is sufficient reason, we believe, to accept as fact that Jesus was the seed of the woman, the Son of God. Therefore, he was able to

give himself as a ransom, a corresponding price, for the perfect man Adam, and the human race in his loins. (I Tim. 2:5,6) Thus we see that God's sure word of prophecy has proven accurate time after time in the past.

PROPHECIES OF THE PRESENT

Let us now look at some of the prophecies pertaining to our day. One of them is the return of the Jewish people to the land of Palestine. This fact alone is sufficient to prove that prophecy is being fulfilled in our day. Jeremiah 16:14,15 reads, "It shall be no more said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

We have seen that prophecy fulfilled in our day. In the next verse of Jeremiah's prophecy, God says that he would send "fishers" to fish them, and "hunters" to hunt them, in order to bring them back to their land. Fishermen drop a hook and wait for the fish to come to the bait. Hunters pursue their quarry to drive it out of hiding. The "fishing" of the Zionist movement and the "hunting" associated with the Holocaust were historical events of the first half of the last century which drove many Jews back to their homeland. The climax of this is Israel's reestablishment as an independent nation in 1948, after more than twenty-five centuries of servitude under Gentile empires and governments. It is thrilling and faith-strengthening to know

that these events of the past century concerning Israel were foretold by the “sure word of prophecy” so long ago.

Another prophecy of our day is found in Daniel 12:1-4. It speaks of the time when “Michael” would “stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people:” and there would be “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” and that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” Furthermore, “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

KNOWLEDGE INCREASING

Our day surely fits the words, “knowledge shall be increased,” more than at any time in mankind’s history. In all the years prior to 1900, it is generally held that accumulated knowledge doubled approximately every century. Then, something dramatically changed. By 1950, knowledge was doubling about every twenty-five years, and by the early part of the 21st century it was estimated to be doubling every year. Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove with certainty, some experts have suggested that now, some twenty years later, knowledge is doubling every twelve hours—a nearly incomprehensible rate to the finite human mind. Regardless of the total accuracy of these numbers, it is clear that, since the beginning of the last century, accumulated knowledge has been increasing at unprecedented rates, with no end in sight. Indeed, how we can see that this aspect of Daniel’s prophetic words have been fulfilled in our own lifetimes.

A knowledge of God’s Word is part of the increase of knowledge in this time in which we live. In

centuries past, the creeds, authored by man, were what most people knew and worshiped. Illiteracy was rife and Bibles were rare, and few had access to the written Word of God. Now, however, the Bible is available worldwide, and in nearly every language. For those who have diligently searched and studied its pages, many have come to understand that our Heavenly Father is not a God of torment or vengeance, but of wisdom, justice, power, and his crowning attribute—love. (I John 4:7-10) God's great love is shown in the oft-repeated promise of the Scriptures, that it is his plan to bless all the nations and families of the earth.—Gen.12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8

Running “to and fro,” as Daniel also prophesied, has been a natural outgrowth of the increase of knowledge. We quote just one source to illustrate this point. In a study done less than two years ago, the United Nations World Tourism Organization estimated that internationally there were just 25 million tourist arrivals in 1950. Sixty-eight years later, in 2018, this number had increased to 1.4 billion international arrivals per year, or a 56-fold increase. Here again, we surely must conclude that Daniel's words concerning mankind running to and fro have come to fruition. This, we believe, has all been by the outworking of God's plan, not by mere human collaboration.

TIME OF TROUBLE

Daniel also foretold of a great “time of trouble” to come upon the world during the same period as when knowledge would be greatly increased and the people would “run to and fro.” Throughout history

there have always been troubles of various kinds in the world. However, when we think of the history of the world from 1914 until the present time, we see two distinct characteristics of the trouble that had never existed before. First, troubles have become worldwide in many cases, and not restricted to small areas of the earth. Second, man now has the ability to destroy earth's entire population, a condition that was not possible less than a century ago.

Jesus quoted this portion of Daniel's prophecy when he said, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time." Then he added, "no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. 24:21) When this trouble is over, and when his righteous kingdom is established, Jesus' words will be fulfilled accurately and fully. This, indeed, will be the last great time of trouble that the world will ever know. We thank God for that! We are still in this time of trouble, and it will no doubt seem to get worse for a time. Nevertheless, when it is over, a new order of society will begin "on earth," one for which millions have prayed for the past 2,000 years: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10

A GLORIOUS TOMORROW PROPHESED

Daniel's prophecy also contains language concerning events which yet lie future. He states, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. 12:2) Just as surely as God, through Daniel, prophesied the increase of knowledge, the running to and fro, and the time of trouble, he also prophesied that those who sleep in the dust of the ground shall awake—that is, the resurrection of the

dead will come to pass. Is our faith strong enough to believe this?

If we are unsure, let us look at other prophecies which foretell of this glorious future time. The first of these is a general one. It is found in Psalm 30:5: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Here we are assured of the morning of a new day. That is what this prophecy means. It says that following this symbolic "night" of trouble and "weeping," there is to be a new day marked with the joy of divine blessing.

Isaiah the prophet spoke similarly, saying, "Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night." (Isa. 21:11,12) We are still in the nighttime of trouble, and according to this prophecy, it is not yet over. However, just as surely also, according to this prophecy, "the morning cometh," and a new day will begin. The morning will come when the "Sun of righteousness" will arise with "healing in his wings," words from yet another prophecy. (Mal. 4:2) The Apostle Paul, likewise, saw this time when he said, "The night, is far spent and, the day, hath drawn near." (Rom. 13:12, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) Therefore, let us rejoice in the knowledge that a glorious new day is soon to break!

BLIND EYES OPENED

The time is coming when "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." (Isa. 35:5,6) These are the words of God, through his faithful prophet, not merely a wishful thought on the part of Isaiah.

Other prophecies speak of this time as being when wars will be no more. “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.” (Isa. 2:4; Ps. 46:9) That is not all. “Thus saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”—Jer. 31:33

During the present Gospel Age, the Lord has been taking out of the world his church, a “little flock,” “a people for his name.” (Luke 12:32; Acts 15:14) Then, after that little flock is chosen and glorified, this present age will come to an end, and the new day that so many have prayed for, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,” will become a reality. (Matt. 6:10) All of these prophecies, and many more, which refer to the conditions of life and peace on the earth, will then be fulfilled.

“They shall build houses, and inhabit them,” and every man shall sit “under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.” (Isa. 65:21; Mic. 4:4) These words do not sound like heaven, do they? They speak of an earthly kingdom—“thy will be done in earth.” When we take these Scriptures and put them in their proper time setting, we can understand the development of God’s great plan of the ages. The church, the little flock, receives the spiritual or heavenly reward. Then all the remainder of mankind will have the opportunity to be blessed with life on the earth.

TWO PHASES OF THE KINGDOM

The Scriptures thus testify that God's coming kingdom is of two parts—a heavenly phase and an earthly phase. We know that present conditions on the earth are not in harmony with God's standards of righteousness, but the Bible says the day will come when they will. All the willing and obedient will recognize the power of God in the affairs of earth. In that day, the Bible promises, mankind will come "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—Isa. 35:10

The prophecies concerning Jesus during his First Advent were accurately and definitely fulfilled. The prophecies of our day are similarly coming to pass. The Bible says that "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Those who respond to the heavenly call during the present Gospel Age, and are faithful unto death, are described as those "that have done good." These receive the heavenly nature, "the resurrection of life." (John 5:28,29) The remainder of mankind—those who either did not hear or respond to the heavenly call, or who lived prior to the Gospel Age, are described as "they that have done ill," and will receive the "resurrection of judgment." (vs. 29, *Revised Version*) They will be raised to life on earth, after the heavenly resurrection has been completed, and all will be given an opportunity to "learn righteousness."—Isa. 26:9

Then will begin the fulfillment of the prophecy of Revelation 21:3-5, in which John said: "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall

be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”

Before that new day ends, God’s will shall be done as fully in earth as it is in heaven. Let us, therefore, look forward to the future with definite assurance. Let us also realize that our God is worthy of our worship and adoration, because he has arranged for the fulfilment of the promises that he made to Abraham when he said he would bless all the families of the earth. ■