

The Truth of the Bible as Seen Through Prophecies

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

Memory Verse

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)

| Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word] | Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature] | Good Works [Behavior] |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. 2. God’s words are absolute. | 1. God is omniscient. 2. God is everlasting. 3. God is faithful. | 1. Seek spiritual growth. 2. Seek spiritual wisdom to discern. 3. Do not grow weary in love. |

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. What Is a Prophecy?
- B. The Purpose of Prophecies
 - 1. To explain and declare things of the future
 - 2. To manifest God’s authority
 - 3. To edify and exhort
 - 4. To comfort
- C. Types of Prophecies and Their Fulfillment
 - 1. Prophecies Concerning the Messiah
 - 2. Prophecies Concerning the Holy Spirit
 - 3. Prophecies Concerning Israel
 - 4. Prophecies Concerning the End Days

Life Application: How Can We Live a Godly Life?

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Because God’s word will never fail and His promises will surely be realized, we must diligently seek out His teachings and walk in them.

Introduction

God is Spirit (Jn 4:24). He is eternal, immortal, and invisible (1 Tim 1:17). Man is limited, but God is without limits. Because of this, unless God makes Himself known to us, we are unable to comprehend the things of God or know whom God is. To better understand Him, He has given us the Bible, within which is God's word, spoken to man. But some people might question: How do we know that the Bible is true and contains the words of God?

Biblical prophecies prove the truth of the perfect word of God. According to the "Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy" by J. Barton Payne (Harper & Row, 1973), approximately thirty percent of the Bible is composed of prophecies, with a total of around 1,817 prophecies, and most of them have been fulfilled historically. In this lesson, we will study different types of prophecies, the function of prophecies, and how prophecies reassure us of our faith in God.

A. What Is a Prophecy?

As stated in Isaiah 46:10, God "[declares] the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done." God is omniscient, and only He knows the future. In order to communicate messages about the future to His people, God called particular individuals to be His prophets. Prophets were God's spokesmen, and their main responsibility was to prophesy to God's people in His name (Amos 7:15).

A prophecy is a verbal or written expression of an event or events that will occur in the future, any time after the prophecy is given. The time period between the prophecy and its fulfillment could be a matter of seconds to hundreds of years. For example, centuries passed before the prophecies regarding the birth of the Messiah were fulfilled. On the other hand, Peter denied Jesus only a few hours after His prophecy.

There are many books in this world that discuss things of the past and of possible future trends. However, many of these books have been long forgotten and forsaken because they are no longer applicable and true. Unlike these books, the Bible has withstood the test of time because it is the word of God, and God's word is truth (Jn 17:17). Furthermore, through the fulfillment of numerous prophecies in the Bible, God's authority and the authenticity of His word has been made clear to us. These prophecies not only serve as a witness to God's omniscient nature, but also declare God's plan and will to all men.

B. The Purpose of Prophecies

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

(2 Pet 1:19–21)

In biblical times, prophecies were mainly for the consolation and edification of God's people. Today, however, they serve as guidance and light in our spiritual journey. By studying the Bible, we can see how prophecies serve various purposes, especially for God's chosen people.

1. To explain and declare things of the future (Isa 42:9)

1 Samuel, chapter 2, records the story of Eli the priest, who had two wicked sons who did evil in the land of Israel. Due to their wickedness and Eli's lack of responsibility as a father and priest, God sent a prophet to Eli to prophesy to him what would happen to his household and to the land of Israel.

And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. [...] And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age. Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them.

(1 Sam 2:32–34)

Sure enough, years later in the battle against the Philistines, Israel was defeated, the ark of God was taken, and Eli's two sons died on the same day (1 Sam 4:10–11). God controls time and space, and there is nothing that He does not know. Through prophecies, God explains what will happen in the future so that His people understand His will.

2. To manifest God's authority

Prophet Isaiah recorded, "Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD?" (Isa 45:21). The Book of Daniel, chapter five, records the story of proud King Belshazzar, who held a great feast for his lords using the gold and silver vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem. During the feast, a man's hand appeared and wrote on the palace walls with a finger.

None of the king's wise men were able to decipher the writing, so King Belshazzar called Daniel and asked him for an interpretation. The writing on the wall was a prophecy: "God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it"; "You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting"; "Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Dan 5:26–29). That same night, King Belshazzar was killed and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom.

The future is preordained by God; the life and death of every person and nation is under His control. His prophecies are a manifestation of His complete authority over yesterday, today, and forever.

3. To edify and exhort (1 Cor 14:3)

During the years of King Asa, the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he said to King Asa, "The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chr 15:1–2). After hearing this, King Asa removed idols from the land of Judah, restored the altar of the Lord, and asked the people to obey the commandments of God and enter into a covenant to seek the Lord.

This prophecy edified the people and gave them the strength to increase their faith. As they determined to change, blessings descended among the people, as prophesied (2 Chr 15:15). Thus, prophecies serve to guide our lives, and also as a way for God to reveal how His people need to change in order to restore their relationship with Him.

4. To comfort

Before the destruction of Jerusalem, God called prophets to prophesy that Judah would return

to their homeland after seventy years of captivity. “For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place” (Jer 29:10). These prophecies revealed the future, but more importantly, they brought hope in times of despair, so that God’s chosen people could hold fast to their belief in Him. God uses His prophecies to give His people hope for the future, so that they can have the courage to face the present.

C. Types of Prophecies and Their Fulfillment

There are over 1,800 prophecies written in the Bible, and all of them testify of the truth and authority of God’s word. To help us understand how they are relevant to us, we can categorize them into four major subjects.

1. Prophecies Concerning the Messiah

There are more than forty prophecies in the Bible concerning the Messiah, made over a period of hundreds of years. These prophecies revolve around the coming of the Messiah, our Savior Jesus Christ.

| Prophecy | Record | Fulfillment |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Messiah will be born of a virgin. | Isa 7:14 | The virgin Mary conceived from the Holy Spirit and gave birth to Jesus Christ, the Savior. (Mt 1:18–25) |
| The Messiah will be of the lineage of David. | Jer 23:5; Mt 22:41–42 | According to recorded genealogy, Jesus is the seed of David. (Mt 1:1, 20) |
| The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. | Mic 5:2; Mt 2:4–6 | Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem, His hometown, for registration in the census. It was there where Jesus Christ was born. (Lk 2:1–7) |
| The King will ride to Jerusalem on a donkey. | Zech 9:9 | Jesus sent two disciples to retrieve a donkey, and then He rode on it while entering Jerusalem. (Mt 21:1–11) |
| The Messiah will be sold for the price of thirty pieces of silver. | Zech 11:12 | Judas Iscariot agreed to betray the Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. (Mt 26:14–15) |
| The Messiah will endure much suffering; even His hands and feet will be pierced. | Ps 22:1–18; Isa 53:8–9 | Jesus Christ was scourged, and endured excruciating pain and humiliation. Then He was crucified on the cross, and both His hands and feet were pierced. (Mt 27:22–23, 26, 32–35) |
| Christ’s bones will not be broken on the cross. | Ps 34:20 | When the soldiers came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs as was customary. Therefore, not one of Jesus’ bones was broken. (Jn 19:33, 36) |
| The Messiah will be raised up from the grave or Sheol. | Ps 16:10 | Jesus Christ resurrected on the third day from His tomb. (Lk 24:1–7; Acts 2:25–32) |

2. Prophecies Concerning the Holy Spirit

Before Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, He commanded His chosen apostles not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5). After He descended, the Spirit worked mightily in the early church. Many people were baptized, and the gospel spread quickly to areas outside of Jerusalem. However, after a few centuries, the church deviated from the truth, and the doctrine was altered from the original teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles.

Because of this, the Holy Spirit ceased to descend, and attempts to correct the truth without Him resulted in different denominations.

In the early twentieth century, God once again bestowed the Holy Spirit upon mankind. He first descended in China, revealing once again the truth and the power of the apostolic times. In 1917, True Jesus Church, the ark of the end times, was established through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

| Prophecy | Record | Fulfillment |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Promise of the early rain to the Israelites | Isa 44:3; Jer 5:24; Ezek 36:26–27; Mt 3:11 | As Jesus promised, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended. (Acts 2:1–4) |
| Promise of the latter rain | Joel 2:28–31; Zech 10:1 | Present |

3. Prophecies Concerning Israel

Would you be able to predict what would happen to your homeland fifty years from now? This is something that only God can do. For that reason, the Bible is the only book that mentions names, nations, and rulers long before they even exist. And the accuracy of these prophecies is confirmed through their fulfillment (Deut 18:22). One particular category of prophecy concerns God’s chosen people, the nation of Israel.

| Prophecy | Record | Fulfillment |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In Abraham’s old age, he was childless. However, God promised Abraham that he will have an heir of his own and that his descendants would be as many as the stars of heaven. | Gen 15:1–5 | Isaac was born to Abraham at the elderly age of 100, and out of Isaac came the nation of Israel. (Gen 21:1–7) |
| God told Abraham that his descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, will serve the people of that land, and be afflicted by them for 400 years. However, they will leave that land with great possessions and shall return to Canaan. | Gen 15:13–14 | In the days of Jacob, he and his household of seventy people moved to Egypt. After the death of Joseph, the Egyptian Pharaoh enslaved the Israelites until Moses led them out of their bondage by God’s mighty hand. Not only did they leave with all of their flocks and herds, but the Egyptians also willingly gave them their riches. (Gen 46:1–7, 26–27; Ex 1:22; 12:35–41) |
| The Israelites refused to hear God’s words, so it was foretold that a king from Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, would come to destroy Jerusalem, and that Israel would serve the king of Babylon in captivity for seventy years. After seventy years, by the mercy and grace of God, Israelites would return to their homeland. | Jer 25:8–12; 29:10 | Because the kings, priests, and people transgressed the law of God and defiled the temple, God allowed the Chaldeans to burn the holy temple and destroy Jerusalem. The Babylonians captured the majority of the Israelites and carried them away to Babylon. After seventy years of captivity, King Cyrus of Persia was moved by God to release the Jews. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah, the Israelites |

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| | | returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. (2 Chr 36:14–23) |
| Jerusalem would be destroyed. | Mt 24:1–2; Lk 19:41–44 | Jerusalem was besieged and burned down by Roman soldiers around A.D. 70. |

4. Prophecies Concerning the End Days

God’s plan will be complete with Jesus Christ’s second coming. There are various prophecies in the Bible that repeatedly remind us of God’s judgment day, and describe what signs to look for as we draw closer to the end days.

From various New Testament verses, we know that Jesus Christ will come again (Acts 1:9–11; 1 Pet 1:13). When the Lord comes again, He will receive those who are saved into the heavenly kingdom and administer judgment on the rest. Jesus Christ said: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Mt 24:36). However, Jesus prophesied about the signs we will witness before His second coming.

| Signs from the world | Signs from the church |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corruption of men’s hearts (2 Tim 3:1–5) • Explosion of knowledge (Dan 12:4) • Wars (Mt 24:6–7) • Natural disasters (Lk 21:11) • Changes in astronomical phenomena (Mt 24:29–30) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temptations from evil spirit (1 Tim 4:1) • Heresy (2 Pet 2:1) • Deception in Jesus’ name (Mt 24:5; Lk 21:8) • Antichrist (1 Jn 2:18–19, 22) • Increase of scoffers (2 Pet 3:3; Jude 18–19) |

Check for Understanding

1. **What is a prophecy?** A prophecy is a verbal or written expression of an event or events that will occur in the future, that is, any time after the prophecy is given.
2. **What qualities of God do we learn about through studying the prophecies in the Bible?** God is omniscient; He is faithful; and His words are everlasting.
3. **Name two purposes of prophecies.** To explain and declare things of the future, to manifest God’s authority, to edify and exhort, and to comfort men.
4. **Name the categories of prophecies studied today.** Prophecies concerning the Messiah, the Holy Spirit, Israel, and the end days.
5. **For each of the four purposes of prophecies: name one prophecy, where it was recorded, and when it was fulfilled.** See *Section B*.
6. **Name one prophecy concerning the Holy Spirit, where it was recorded, and when it was fulfilled.** Please refer to the appropriate chart.
7. **Name one sign of the end times from the world and one sign from the church.** Please refer to the appropriate chart.

Life Application

Whether concerning the Messiah, the Holy Spirit, or the nation of Israel, the Bible’s prophecies have all been fulfilled. Thus, we know that God’s word is the truth and will not fail. With this understanding in mind, we can be certain that Jesus Christ and the judgment day will come.

Jesus stated in Matthew 24:36 that no one knows the day and hour of His second coming. However, we do know that we will face judgment on the day He comes again, so we must constantly remind ourselves to live a godly life in preparation for meeting the Lord one day.

How Can We Live a Godly Life?

1. Resist temptations

Now that we know the signs of the end times, we must not be easily deceived or follow the trends of this world. We must actively guard against those who entice us with knowledge and speculation of the end. We must determine not to follow or live a life like those who have no hope for eternity, because we know that God will bring everything we do, good or bad, into judgment (Eccl 12:14).

2. Stand firm in hope

Hold fast to the teachings of the Bible as we yearn for the coming of Jesus Christ. We will encounter trials and tribulations in life, but we know that God's words and promises will never fail. With the power of the Holy Spirit, diligently pursue what is right and pure in the sight of the Lord. Remember that God is our hope in our sufferings and weaknesses.

3. Live for Christ

Whether good or bad, God will bring every work into judgment. Therefore, we must keep our eyes focused on God and the path to salvation as we live our lives. We must not become weary in doing good or showing love to those in need. Our conduct should be that of a person who glorifies God and seeks spiritual growth through prayer and spiritual cultivation.

Memory Verse

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matthew 24:35)

Meaning

This world is constantly changing. All living things undergo the cycle of life: beliefs or theories will change with new discoveries, and material objects will fail the test of time. In contrast to this ever-changing world, God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We know that God is the same because He is beyond time and space. He holds the future, and all of creation is subject to Him. In addition to this, the prophecies in the Bible, which are God's word to man, have been fulfilled one by one, further proving to us that His words are true. They will not fail and will surely be realized.

Conclusion

The prophecies of the Bible are truth. Knowing this, we have the assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ will certainly come again. Knowing that God's word will never fail and His promises will be realized, we must diligently seek out His teachings and walk in them. To prepare ourselves for His coming, we must live a life of constant renewal that is a sweet aroma in the presence of God. As the prophecies were revealed to men through the movement of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will strengthen and guide us in His truth.

Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What characteristics of God can we learn from this verse?
That unlike this ever-changing world, He is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and is always the same because He is beyond time and space.
2. What are the four purposes of the prophecies?
To explain and declare things of the future; to manifest God's authority; and to edify and exhort.
3. Pick one of the purposes and explain it in your own words, with an example from the Bible.
 - a. *God controls time and space, and there is nothing that He does not know. Through prophecies, God explains what will happen in the future so that His people understand His will. An example from the Bible is the prophecy regarding Eli and his two sons, recorded in 1 Samuel, chapter 2.*
 - b. *The future is preordained by God; the life and death of every person and nation is under His control. His prophecies are a manifestation of His complete authority over yesterday, today, and forever. An example is the prophecy regarding King Belshazzar's fall (Dan 5:26–29).*
 - c. *God's prophecies edify His people and give us the strength to grow in faith. They serve to guide our lives, and also serve as a way for God to reveal how His people need to change in order to restore their relationship with Him. An example is the people's obedience to draw closer to God under King Asa (2 Chr 15:1–2).*
 - d. *God's prophecies bring faith in times of despair, so that God's chosen people could hold fast to their belief in Him. He uses prophecies to give His people hope for the future, so that they may have the courage to face the present. An example is the prophecy of Judah's return to the promised land after seventy years of captivity (Jer 29:10).*
4. Under what four subjects can we categorize the Bible's prophecies?
Prophecies concerning: the Messiah; the Holy Spirit; Israel; and the end days.
5. What are three ways to live a godly life?
Resist temptations, stand firm in hope, and live for Christ.
6. Choose one of the above ways to live a godly life. Which do you need to improve on, and how?
Personal answers.