

BIBLE NEWS PROPHECY

Should Christians vote?



**Does God EVER
Forsake Us?**

**Is Christmas a Biblical
or
Demonic Holiday?**

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About the Front Cover: These are photos of the two major party candidates for the office of President of the United States. The photograph of Donald Trump was by Michael Vadon and the photograph of Hillary Clinton is by Gage Skidmore.

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FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF,



BOB THIEL:

Should Christians Vote?

The world is a complicated place with many types of problems. In the world's so-called democracies, politicians campaign to persuade us to vote for them so that they can help solve these problems.

Around the world, election issues and problems usually include matters like the economy, environment, crime, international leadership, defense, and a host of social concerns. Community leaders with different ideas wish to persuade us that their group's choice is the one that will be best for the country.

Many of these leaders bring religion into the campaign.

Should Christians vote?

The Bible teaches that Christians should follow Jesus' example (Philippians 2:5). So if Jesus was an American citizen, would He actually vote? In countries with parliamentary systems, would He vote for a certain party to get a particular prime minister?

In the USA, some seem to think that Jesus would vote for members of the Democratic party, because Democrats are perceived by some to be more compassionate than Republicans. Others feel certain that Jesus would vote for Republicans because Republicans are perceived by some to be more "pro-life" (anti-abortion) than Democrats. Some others, noting hypocrisy in both major parties, feel that Jesus would vote for the candidates offered by the smaller political parties due to their personalities or views on different subjects.

But would Jesus go to a polling place and vote for anyone?

Democracy is Not New

Democracy was known before the time of Christ. In ancient Greece, all the male citizens were expected to vote on the issues facing their society. The Greeks introduced the concept of democracy to the Romans. The Romans (who were somewhat skeptical of the Greek model) set up a modified form of democracy called a republic. In a republic, elected representatives are supposed to vote for their interpretation of the will of the people. The U.S., other "democracies" of the world (with Switzerland as perhaps the most notable exception as it is more patterned after the Greek model), and even many churches are patterned after the Roman model.

Most people in western societies seem to feel that some form of democracy is the best form of government. Would God agree? The Bible warns us, "there is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 16:25). It also warns us, "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

In Genesis 2:17 God warned Adam and Eve to not partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But Adam and Eve did not listen to God. After listening to Satan, they decided that they did not need to listen to God but that they should decide for themselves (Gen 3:1-6). This is the first recorded act of human democracy in action.

Nowhere in the entire Bible do we see God sanctioning democracy.

The Bible shows that God appointed His leaders and made them known to His people. From Enoch to Noah to Moses to David to the Prophets to Jesus and even to the Apostles, we read nothing about God encouraging democracy.

Actually according to the Bible, democracy is condemned. When Samuel was God's appointed leader/judge, the majority of the people wanted

a king like the rest of the world. Even though there appeared to have been legitimate criticisms of Samuel's leadership, God told Samuel that the people had rejected God and not Samuel (I Samuel 8:1-9). The Bible says it was evil in the sight of God for the people to ask to have a government like the other nations around them (I Samuel 12: 17).

The Bible teaches that God sets up as leaders whomever He wants, and this is the "lowliest of people" (Daniel 4:17, NIV). And in the case of the USA, whoever becomes the next president will be apocalyptic in the sense that the next president will take steps that will lead to the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecies.

The Bible records incidences of religious leaders who felt that they were as good as the leaders that God appointed, but God had other ideas.

For example, Korah (who was a religious leader and a Levite) was apparently in favor of voting and a republican form of government (which is what, the United States, for example, claims to have).

After assembling 250 supporters (who were community leaders/representatives) he said to Moses and Aaron:

3 You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? (Numbers 16:3).

God clearly did not agree with Korah's assessment and God decreed death to Korah and his followers (Numbers 16:32). When some of the people thought that God's punishment was excessive, God also severely punished them as well (Numbers 16:49). Thus, it should be clear that God did not sanction voting in a republican form of government.

The New Testament Does Not Sanction Democracy

If democracy was to be sanctioned in the Bible for Christians, most certainly it would be sanctioned in the New Testament. Greek and Roman ways were widely known. In the New Testament we read of Jesus appointing apostles. Paul writes that God first appoints apostles, secondarily prophets, etc. for the edifying the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11,12).

When Judas needed to be replaced (after his betrayal of Jesus and his suicide), the apostles did not have an election, they followed the Biblical example of seeking God's will:

24 You, O Lord, who know hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen...26 And they cast their lots. (Acts 1:24,26).

Notice the apostles did not decide that they were qualified to see into a person's heart.

Some have written that various forms of democracy are now acceptable because they believe certain scriptures in the book of Acts imply it. The primary verses appear to be in the story of Acts 15. In Acts 15 many of the apostles and elders met together to discuss circumcision and Gentile believers. A multitude of counsellors was used to discuss the matter. Some feel that using counsel is indicative of democracy. However, the fact that a multitude of counsellors was used does not change God's form of government. In the Old Testament we read that not only has God always encouraged this practice (Proverbs 11:14), we also read that God himself engaged in it (2 Chronicles 18;18-21); thus the fact that some of the Church leadership followed this practice only shows that God's governmental practices from the Old Testament were to be continued.

It is interesting to note something else mentioned in the Book of Acts.

Notice the warning to religious people who thought that they were doing the right thing:

38 "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God." (Acts 5:38-39)

Those who vote in worldly elections apparently believe they know aspects of the plan of God that there is no human way they could know.

Yet, look at what God said to Samuel, one clearly called and appointed by God, when Samuel thought he knew who should be the next king over Israel:

6 So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:6-7).

Samuel was chosen by God, but did not know who God would pick. Are you sure that you know better than He?

Democracy is Not God's Form of Government

It is also interesting to realize that many who believe that the New Testament sanctions democracy also believe that God's future ruling government (in the Kingdom of God) will not be a democracy.

Jesus told the apostles that they would be rulers over the twelve tribes of Israel in his kingdom

(Luke 22:30). Jesus chose the disciples, they did not get their positions from any form of democracy (John 15:16; 6:70). God, not man, chose David to be king over Israel originally (Acts 13:22) and has also chosen him to be king over all Israel in the world ahead (Jeremiah 30:9).

By the way, Jesus said that God the Father has reserved who will have certain positions of authority in the kingdom of God (Mat 20:23). The rewards in the kingdom will be Jesus' to give (Revelation 22:12); they will not be for the people to take for themselves.

Democracy will not be God's form of government in His kingdom.

Why?

One of the many problems of voting is that no human thinks the way God does.

8 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways', says the LORD (Isaiah 55:8).

When Jesus was on Earth he proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God and told people to repent (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus refused to participate in even the most elementary governmental decisions while He was on the earth (Luke 12:13-14).

Although Jesus taught that we were to pay taxes (Matthew 22:17-21), He also taught that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). While taxes are required by nearly all governments, voting is not (note: if your government legally requires that you vote, pray and attempt to do the least you are required to do).

Jesus taught His disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel to everyone (Matthew

28:19,20). Jesus said that His disciples were to be in the world, but not of it (John 17:16).

The apostle Peter clearly understood this. He wrote that being part of God's people made one part of a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). The apostle Paul wrote that this present world was evil (Galatians 1:4). The Bible warns of the consequences of being part of the world's systems and its governments and tells us to come out of it and to be separate (Revelation 18:2-5).

Look at what the Bible teaches will happen in the Last Days and what Christians are to do about it:

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, 3 unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

The aspects of the above remind me of various political leaders, including the leading two running for the office of the President of the United States. Notice that God's word does not encourage voting as the solution to those issues in the last days, but to turn away from such people.

Paul said that Christians are to be ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).

What is an ambassador? *Merriam-Webster* has the following definition:

1 : an official envoy; *especially* : a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative

of his or her own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment
2 *a* : an authorized representative or messenger

If you are a real Christian, you are an authorized, official envoy, for Christ!

Ambassadors often live in alien nations, some of which are clearly hostile to their beliefs. Ambassadors, though they live in other societies, do not involve themselves in the politics of the societies that they live in. There is a time for God's people to take over the governments of this world, but it is not yet (John 18:36, Daniel 7:17-18). It will be after the second coming of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:16, Revelation 11:15).

To Christians, Peter wrote:

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. 11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. Honor Authority 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. (1 Peter 2:9-15, NASB).

Aliens and strangers in a land do not vote.

Now the Bible does mention one particular vote by the Apostle Paul (while he was still Saul and thus unconverted). Notice what he later said about it:

9 Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, **I cast my vote against them** (Acts 26:9-10).

And while the above is not of itself a blanket condemnation of all voting, it is the only time the word "vote" or "voting" is in the Bible. And it does show that even religiously zealous/conservative/liberal individuals do not always vote correctly and can *do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*.

Whose World is it Now?

Various ones claim that it is the duty of Christians to vote.

Most who profess Christ do not believe that the Kingdom of God is the answer for what is facing their nation or the world. Although the Bible says Christians are to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7), they reason that God would want them to do something God does not command.

Consider also the following scriptures:

3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

The gospel is hidden to those who involve themselves in Satan's political world.

How? They are submitting to the devil's authority, not God's. They fail to do take the following seriously enough:

2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:2)

The Bible also teaches that the "serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan ... deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

The solution to the world's ills is the return of Jesus and the establishment of the Kingdom of God, not political leaders.

When people get wrapped up in the world's politics and his governments, they are submitting to Satan's idea of how to run things apart from God. Many seem to place more hope in elections than the Kingdom of God.

What is a Christian to do?

Notice what Jesus prayed:

14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. (John 17:14-17)

True Christians are in the world, not of it. This age is Satan's according to the Bible.

The biblical truth is that Christians are not to be partakers of Satan's worldly system That is not the way to bring in the Kingdom of God.

Politicians are Not the Answer, the Return of Jesus Christ Is

Notice a secular view related to the 2012 USA presidential election as it has some ideas to ponder related to the 2016 campaign as well:

When confronted with the false dilemma of the democratic political process, many individuals settle for the “less of two evils” as a kind of compromise. ...

Contrary to the popular snipe that “only those who vote have the right to complain,” common sense leads us to quite the opposite conclusion. It is only those who have *not* aggressed against others who have the right to complain when they are aggressed against. Those who, to invert a phrase, “feed the mouth that bites them,” may stand firmly, but do so on shaky ground.

A vote for *either* evil is nonetheless a vote *for* evil. (Daily Reckoning, October 19, 2012)

It is interesting to see a secular source coming to similar conclusions regarding the ‘democratic system’ and the US presidential election. Of course, many professing Christians believe that they need to vote even though that concept is not endorsed in the Bible.

But notice two concepts that are:

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil (Isaiah 5:20).

2 You shall not follow a crowd to do evil (Exodus 23:2)

The “lesser of two evils” is still not good.

Let’s look at some of what the scriptures teach are to be traits of godly leaders:

19 Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. 20 And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. 21 Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. (Exodus 18:19-21)

2 “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. 3 The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me: ‘He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God. (2 Samuel 23:2-3)

Few politicians endorse God’s laws and statutes and do not possess covetousness. Hence they are not people that Christians should endorse.

Consider also the following:

14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

National repentance and prayer is what the USA needs or it is biblically-doomed (cf. Habakkuk 2:6-8; Daniel 11:39). The same holds true for its Anglo-Saxon descended allies such as the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The whole world needs to repent (cf. Acts 17:30).

Although many sincerely believe that it is their “Christian duty” to vote (even though that

“duty” is not specified in the Bible), some seem to have overlooked some prophecies related to political leaders in the end times:

12 As for My people, children are their oppressors, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, And destroy the way of your paths.” (Isaiah 3:12)

16 For the leaders of this people cause them to err, And those who are led by them are destroyed (Isaiah 9:16).

It should be clear that Isaiah prophesied that there would be end time leaders that cause people to err. This is what many politicians, directly, and indirectly, do.

While it is true, that like the King of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-6), political leaders *could* call for national repentance after enough people began a fast, the reality is that this simply is not something that many of them ever seriously consider, let alone do. It seems that this will not happen (unless perhaps after the prophesied destruction).

God will decide who He wants in various offices, and that is not always the ‘best’ person:

17 This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men. (Daniel 4:17)

By voting, one could be voting against God's will. God's people do not want to be found fighting against God (Acts 5:39).

Once, in the 1970s, I actually voted in an election. But for some reason, I decided not to vote for attorney general. If I would have voted for that office, I probably would have voted for the man that won--a man that later was involved

with a massive lawsuit against the Church of God I was part of in the late 1970s. Obviously, I would not have done that on purpose, but am glad that I did not accidentally assist in empowering one who was against the COG (and that was perhaps the only office I did not cast a vote for then).

Notice also a disturbing comment from a secular source that generally supports democracy:

All political campaigns lie and mislead. We all know that, and that knowledge is “baked into the cake,” so to speak, when it comes to assessing candidates. (Bookman J. GM on Romney: ‘Campaign politics at its cynical worst.’ *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, October 31, 2012)

No candidate should lie or mislead. And while I am not agreeing with the statement that they all do, the reality is that it is not godly conduct to lie or mislead, and that not only reflects unfavourably on the candidates, but also the process of modern democracy.

The Bible is clear that humankind, apart from God, cannot solve its problems. **Jesus will return and He will be the non-humanly elected King of Kings** (Revelation 17:14). Problems all humans have faced will be solved by the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God:

3 "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; **there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain**, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." (Revelation 21:3-5)

No matter which politician gets elected in carnal governments, human political leaders will not bring this about.

What Should Christians Do About Leaders?

If Christians are not supposed to vote, what should we do about leaders?

Pray for them!

Notice what Paul wrote:

1 Therefore **I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority**, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 For **this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior** (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

Notice that we are to pray for worldly leaders and those that have authority over us so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life. Nothing like this is said for voting that many falsely claim is their "Christian" duty--prayer for leaders is.

We also are to pray:

14 The will of the Lord be done (Acts 21:14).

Similarly, Jesus taught:

7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. 9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. **Your will be done** On earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:7-10).

And that, I believe, should be the type of prayer

that Christians have about elections. Followers of the true God are also told to:

5 **Trust in the LORD with all your heart**, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and **depart from evil** (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Voting for one promoting evil, like abortion (like Hillary Clinton) and "country first," in violation of the first commandment, in the case of certain USA Republicans (like Donald Trump) is not a Christian thing to do.

Many people, however, apparently are not satisfied with the biblical admonitions to trust God to choose political leaders. This is not new (1 Samuel 8:6-7).

And while I can certainly understand that people often feel that they should do more, people often forget that God inspired Jeremiah to write:

23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23).

Also notice what Hosea was inspired to write:

6 Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually (Hosea 12:6).

It may be of interest to point out that Jesus suggested that people would take matters in their own hands thinking that they are doing God a service (John 16:2). And while this referred to killing, the principle is still that one should not violate what God instructs and justify it by thinking that is what God wants one to do.

Should a Christian vote?

Christians are not to be part of this world (Revelation 18:1-4), but are to be ambassadors

for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). True Christians “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

Jesus did not vote while He was on this earth. A Christian ambassador should follow the leadership of Jesus Christ and the Bible and not vote.

The Bible never enjoins voting or democracy. The Bible condemns both individual and republican voting.

The Bible teaches that Christians should pray about their governmental leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-3)--it never teaches that voting is a Christian duty.

Those truly concerned about the selection of leadership of their countries should pray (and if safely possible fast) for “The will of the Lord be done” (Acts 21:14).



Does God EVER Forsake Us?

By Colin Adair

This was originally published in the Good News magazine of the old Worldwide Church of God in October-November 1979. I, Bob Thiel, met him once in 1997 or 1998.

The atheist, to support his belief that there is no God, will point to the terrible conditions in the world and say: "See, there can't be a god. And even if you could convince me there is one, I would say he has certainly forgotten and forsaken mankind."

We of God's Church know this is not true. We know that God is and that He has a plan and is working it out step by step. He has not forsaken His people.

And yet at times do we, His people, feel that God has forsaken us, especially when things don't go right, when our prayers seem to go unanswered and our trials appear endless?

Human nature doubts

Similar doubts must have entered the minds of some of the great men of God, even when God was working with them, because it's a human tendency.

Noah may have looked out over the expanse of water and wondered if God would remember him. Noah and his family emerged from their place of safety after a year and 10 days. That's a long time to be shut up in a ship. But whenever doubts entered Noah's mind he must have reminded himself of God's promise, and sure enough, God remembered Noah (Gen. 8:1).

Abraham, the father of the faithful, was not so perfect that he never thought on occasion that God had forgotten him. After being told that he would have a son and heir by his wife, Sarah, his patience wore thin. He may have reasoned that God had forgotten or forsaken him in his old age. But he discovered that God was very much aware of His promise (Gen. 21:1-2).

Did Joseph ever have any doubts enter his mind? After having a dream in which his brothers and parents bowed down to him, he was soon after unceremoniously sold as a slave into a foreign land. His fortune picked up somewhat in Potiphar's household only to vanish in the harsh reality of an Egyptian jail. Where was God? Had He forgotten and forsaken him?

When the chance came to get out of prison, and it looked like God was at last doing something about his plight, his new-found butler friend, who had promised to speak to the Pharaoh on his behalf, promptly forgot him!

This setback would have discouraged any man. Joseph, being human, must have had doubts cross his mind about God's concern for him. But deep inside he remained convinced that God was with him, and subsequent events proved that God had never forsaken him for a minute.

Perhaps the greatest example of a man whom God seemed to forsake was Job. After losing all his livestock, servants and his children in a series of catastrophes that resembled a modern-day blitzkrieg, he said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

He knew it was God's doing and that God was still with him. At this point in his trial Job's attitude was still exemplary. Verse 22 tells us in all this Job sinned not. Perhaps other men, with less strength than Job, would have accused God

of forsaking them and not protecting their property and families.

King David's example

Probably the best example we have of this tendency of human nature is that of King David. Many times he was in sore distress and felt that God had forsaken him. But notice how he tackled this doubt.

In Psalm 13:1-2, we read:

"How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?"

Here was his human nature crying out to God and in a sense saying God had forsaken him. But even as these doubts fired up his mind he quickly doused them with positive thoughts of God's deep concern for him. Verse 5,

"But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation."

David knew deep within him that God would in His own good time rescue him and that he was not forsaken. Notice another time that David doubted for a while. Psalm 42:9-10:

"I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"

Not only was David wondering where God was, but his enemies taunted him and added to his temptation to doubt by their jeers. But David didn't allow these negative thoughts to take root in his mind.

His knowledge of God and His love for Him dominated his mind during discouragement. He corrected his own thoughts. Verse 11, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

When David's human nature was at its lowest he reached down into the depths of his mind and remembered God's faithfulness and knew that he was not forsaken.

Who has forsaken whom?

Whenever we begin to think God has turned His back on us, we need to examine ourselves and see who has forsaken whom. Perhaps God doesn't answer our prayers and save us from our trials because we have forsaken Him.

What are the ways we forsake or forget God? The most common way is disobedience to His laws. Proverbs 3:1 warns,

"My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments."

Verse 6,

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

God will always direct all our paths if we walk continually with Him and obey Him.

Are we keeping the Sabbath properly? Are we faithfully tithing? Do we observe the Holy Days and plan to attend the Feast of Tabernacles by saving our second tithe? Do we obey God's government, realizing His government is here right now in the Church, and God is watching our attitudes and degree of service?

Another way we sometimes forsake God is by neglect of prayer and Bible study. Proverbs

8:33-34: "Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." Don't accuse God of forsaking you when you turn your back on Him.

Are you constant in prayer? Luke 18:1,

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Perhaps you ask once, and when you don't get an answer immediately, you think God didn't listen or forgot your petition.

But God will answer in His own way and in His own time. We need to keep reminding Him and patiently waiting. Never assume God has forsaken you and is not interested any more in answering your prayers.

Don't despise reproof

An important and often overlooked way we can forsake God is by not heeding His counselor advice. Proverbs 1:24-25,

"Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But you have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof."

Verses 30-33:

"They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away [we, not God] of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

How does this counsel reach us? Most of it is through the ministry of God's Church. It works in two ways. First, through sermons and secondly, through personal counseling.

We open church services by asking God's inspiration on the speakers. But as a member of the congregation do you think the minister is merely giving you his own opinion? Do you criticize the sermon afterwards?

God's true ministers will speak God's will, not their own opinions. No, they're not infallible and can and do make mistakes, but the overall messages you hear, the admonitions you receive, are from God through His servants.

His servants give you the understanding of His will, built on the basic and proved doctrines of God, which all members already have as a foundation (Heb. 6:1-2). Here is where God counsels His people. Be sure you don't reject it because to do so is to forsake God's counseling.

So we should not blame God when we are at fault, feeling He isn't interested in us anymore.

Look what He says in Isaiah 49:14-16 about this attitude. "But Zion [spiritually the Church] said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

After His kind

We are God's special Work, His present spiritual creation. God has set His hand to create others of His kind. He does not forsake what He has begun. He sees it through.

And Christ, our High Priest, is concerned that we make it. He will not drop our cause. John 10:27-30:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Together they are concerned about bringing everyone they choose into the Family of God. John 6:39,

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

After making this commitment to Himself and to Christ, will He turn His back on us and busy Himself with some other work more important than His own reproduction? There is no more important work right now in God's mind! Jesus Christ wills us to make it to the Kingdom of God. John 17:24,

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

How sad it is to see former brethren feel that Christ has forsaken His people, the Church. He tells us He will be with us until the end of this age (Matt. 28:20).

What a pity the enemies of God's Church don't realize this before they lift their hand against the Church. They always find that indeed Christ is still with us and has not forsaken us. They discover it is hard to fight against God.

Put God first

As long as we seek Him and stay with Him, we have a guarantee that God will never leave us. Luke 12:31-32: "But rather seek ye the kingdom

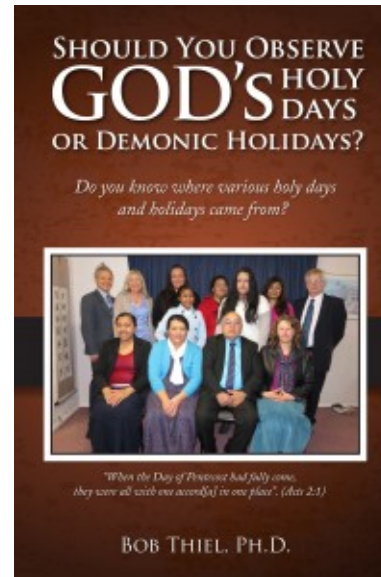
of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

There is nothing to fear. Whenever things aren't going well, God knows it. He is well aware of it and has a purpose in it.

We just need to make sure we don't forget God. When we are tempted to think this way humanly, we should remember David and remind ourselves of God's great promise, found in Hebrews 13:5,

"Let your conversation [conduct] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Is Christmas a Biblical or Demonic Holiday?



By Bob Thiel

Christmas is the biggest commercial holiday on the planet. Billions believe it is a biblical celebration. Few seem to realize that the Bible never endorses the celebration of birthdays, including that of Jesus. Nor does the Bible point towards December 25th as the day Jesus was born (the Bible points to a time of His birth in the early Fall).

Furthermore, the early Church of Rome did not celebrate Christmas nor any other birthday. Furthermore, Tertullian warned that to participate in the winter celebrations with wreaths and gift-giving made one behold to pagan gods. There was one such celebration known as the Saturnalia that was celebrated by the heathen in late December.

The claimed "father of Latin theology," Tertullian denounced winter celebrations, such as Saturnalia (from a pagan deity whose name meant plentiful) which morphed into Christmas in the 4th century after a follower of the sungod

Mithras became affiliated with the Church of Rome.

The Roman Saturnalia and the Persian Mithraism themselves were adaptations of an even earlier pagan religion – that of the ancient Babylonian mystery cult. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the reborn Nimrod as the newborn Tammuz by worshipping an evergreen tree. The Bible condemns worship involving evergreen trees (Deuteronomy 12:2-3; Jeremiah 3:13; 10:2-6).

The Babylonians also celebrated a rebirth of the sun during the season of the winter solstice. December 25th was eventually chosen as the date of Jesus' birthday, because the Saturnalia and other sun god worship happened at that time of the year. Also, it was supposed to be the date of the pagan deity Mithras' birth. December 25th did not come from the Bible.

To learn more, check out our free booklet *Should You Observe God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays*. It is available online at www.ccog.org.

STUDY THE BIBLE COURSE

Lesson 10: Symbol of Fulfilled Prophecy



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of God

Preface: This course is highly based upon the personal correspondence course developed in 1954 that began under the direction of the late C. Paul Meredith in the old Radio Church of God. Various portions have been updated for the 21st century (though much of the original writing has been retained). It also has more scriptural references, as well as information and questions not in the original course. Unless otherwise noted, scriptural references are to the NKJV, copyright Thomas Nelson Publishing, used by permission. The KJV, sometimes referred to as the Authorized Version is also often used.

Additionally, Catholic-approved translations such as the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) are sometimes used as are other translations.

PROPHECY IS A PROOF OF GOD!

It has been estimated that about 1/3 of the Bible is prophetic (there are various estimates, but we likely will not know how much was prophetic until after the first resurrection, which is also prophetic.

While most people, who claim Christianity, claim to believe at least parts of the Bible, and countless millions claim to believe all of it, many claim little interest in prophecy. Most are content to overlook a lot of what the word of God teaches. And among those who do claim to value the prophetic word, the vast majority simply do not understand many aspects of it.

In a sense, the startling headlines of WORLD NEWS for the next decade or so are ALREADY WRITTEN IN ADVANCE—in prophecy! Yet heads of governments—and most people—are totally oblivious to them!

Tomorrow's News Today!

TOMORROW'S news is ALREADY WRITTEN in Bible PROPHECY! It stands written long BEFORE the coming earth-shaking events of God's wrath occur—but most people today ignore the world's "best seller."

Few really believe the BIBLE MEANS WHAT IT SAYS—and still fewer UNDERSTAND its prophecies!

Most people would say it was IMPOSSIBLE for men—over 2600 years ago—to have looked into the future and FORETOLD what is going to happen in OUR DAY to ALL THE MAJOR NATIONS.

Weather experts often fail in foretelling the weather even 24 or 48 hours in advance. What chance would anyone have of foretelling specific catastrophes to happen to great nations like the United States? To the British-descended nations? To Germany? Russia? Or China? And having the prophecies come true—unless they were DIVINELY INSPIRED?

Fantastic Prophecies

Such men did exist! Such prophecies were made!

The prophets who foretold the fate of the nations today—who foretold what is to happen in perhaps the next 15 years of our lifetime—ALSO declared over 2600 years ago what THEN SEEMED FANTASTIC, IMPROBABLE, EVEN IMPOSSIBLE events which were to happen to the great nations and city-states of THAT WORLD LONG AGO.

THOSE PROPHECIES HAPPENED! They happened centuries later—they were fulfilled PRECISELY AS THE PROPHETS FORETOLD! And the PROOF you will find in this lesson!

If the Bible foretold the future of all the leading nations 2600 years ago—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, the Roman Empire and all those prophecies came to pass, THEN IT'S ABOUT TIME WE BEGIN TO PAY ATTENTION AND LOOK INTO THE PROPHECIES OF THE BIBLE to see what they reveal about the nations TODAY—and to see what they foretell for our people. FOR WE ARE INCLUDED IN BIBLE PROPHECIES!

TODAY God is making His existence known to you by showing that His inspired Word—the Holy Bible, can be depended upon.

What Does FULFILLED Prophecy Prove?

Is it rational to believe in GOD? Or is God a myth—an invention of an ignorant, superstitious past?

And are Biblical prophecies in reality only shrewd guesses of certain Jews who lived more than 2,000 years ago?

In today's chaotic and deceived world, the question of God's existence and of the inspiration of prophecy is disturbing increasing numbers of people. Many say they want the TRUTH! They claim they are through being fooled—they are through taking FABLES for granted as FACTS, blindly assuming what is popularly taught. Many want to know! They want the proof!

You OUGHT TO FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT IT!

The place to start this honest search for the truth is with GOD Himself. It ought to be the MOST IMPORTANT PURSUIT of your life to ask about and to SEEK the PROOF of God's existence and the inspiration of His written prophetic word—the Holy Bible!

PROPHECY fulfillment IS PROOF of the EXISTENCE OF GOD ALMIGHTY. It is the PROOF of the DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE. It is the PROOF that the Bible is the REVELATION of the facts from God Almighty which we could not otherwise discover or know in advance.

Whoever was the real inspiration behind the prophecies of the Bible KNEW OVER 2600 YEARS AGO THE CONDITION THE WORLD WOULD BE IN TODAY—the internal condition of the United States, of Russia, of China, and of all the leading nations of the earth. The God who inspired the Bible knew millennia ago what is going to happen in the imminent future!

Is it logical, then, to believe in the God who made His PLAN for our earth known thousands of years in advance?

Bible Dares to Foretell the Future!

Most people are AFRAID of Bible prophecy! They

fear that if they should ever examine fulfilled prophecy, they would FIND the PROOF of the divine inspiration of Scripture!

If prophecies have not been fulfilled, then the skeptics would have the proof that the Bible is a fraud. The Bible would stand as the most diabolical hoax ever perpetrated upon a gullible religious world. BUT PROPHECY HAS BEEN FULFILLED—and the PROOF is in this lesson of the *Study the Bible Course*!

Here is a Book—The Holy Bible—which taunts the skeptics by daring to foretell within its pages the future history of this world! God DARES us to look within its pages and prove its undeniable inspiration!

We may not be ATHEISTS, SKEPTICS, OR AGNOSTICS. We may not RIDICULE the Holy Bible. But we are living in an age of CARELESSNESS, and of DOUBT. Very few people want to exercise their minds sufficiently to PROVE whether or not Bible PROPHECIES are really inspired of God. Fewer still TREMBLE before what these prophecies say, or regard them as having REAL AUTHORITY!

Most highly educated people, and that includes people of science, ASSUME that the Bible is not the infallible revelation of a Supreme Supernatural God. They assume this WITHOUT THE SCIENTIFIC PROOF that they demand on ordinary material matters. They TAKE IT FOR GRANTED that prophecies, which are a proof of God, could not be true—but they have not DARED to investigate. THEY DO NOT WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH OF THIS MATTER!

Most 'fundamentalists', on the other hand, take for granted that Scripture is the very Word of God—but they reject its AUTHORITY over their lives. Therefore, they too, DO NOT UNDERSTAND ITS PROPHECIES. Witness the Babylon of doctrinal confusion over Bible prophecy. Hardly any two of them agree on most prophetic matters. They profess Christ, but they DENY His message.

It is time we quit taking these prime questions for granted. "Do not despise prophecies. TEST ALL THINGS ("PROVE ALL THINGS" as the KJV puts it); HOLD FAST WHAT IS GOOD" (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21).

How Can You Prove Scripture?

Christ Himself is quoted in the Bible as saying, "The Scripture CANNOT be broken" (John 10:35). But CAN it be broken? Did YOU ever try to break it? Did YOU ever really put its prophecies TO THE TEST—and prove them?

Isn't it about time we stop to seek out the proofs one way or the other?

Some people seem to think that the only way to prove the inspiration of the Bible—and hence of its prophecies—is by means of Jesus' miracles. But the skeptics do not believe those miracles ever happened—even though the historical testimony of the unconverted Jews and pagans admitted that Jesus DID PERFORM those miracles! The skeptics would have us believe that even Jesus' enemies were gullible enough to think they really happened. The skeptic wants proof that he can EXAMINE TODAY!

Immediately many think of ANSWERED PRAYER as the major proof of inspiration. But the skeptic has had no prayers ANSWERED. He does not believe that ANYBODY ELSE has either. "Merely circumstances that the religious superstitiously attribute to God"—that is the way the skeptic regards answered prayer.

There is, however, one source of IRREFUTABLE PROOF! This source of proof he can examine with his own eyes and demonstrate to be false—if there is no God!

The Bible itself purports to be infallible, a divine revelation of truth revealed by the very Creator and Divine Ruler of the universe. In your Bible, A BEING IS QUOTED. He claims that He is God. He speaks in the first person, saying that He can

make and unmake nations, that He can carry out His judgments—His decisions—over millennia of time, claiming that He can foretell infallibly the future of cities and empires, but that NO MAN can do the same.

WHO IS THIS who is quoted as saying:

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,'...Indeed I have spoken it; I will also BRING IT TO PASS. I have purposed it; I will also do it. (Isaiah 46:9-11.)

Here are the words of One claiming to be God — claiming not only that He knows the future, but that HE KNOWS IT BECAUSE HE DETERMINES IT—BECAUSE HE HAS THE POWER TO CARRY OUT HIS WILL!

TAUNTING the Skeptics

Skeptics, of course, say that the Bible is NOT the inspired Word of God, but merely the religious writings of an insignificant ancient nation—the Jews, who were groping in the darkness of human ignorance and superstition, trying to develop a concept of what they thought God would say were He to exist!

But is it? WHO IS THIS claiming to foretell the future? Is it merely an ignorant, superstitious, albeit pious, ancient Jew with no power to make good his vaunted concept of God, who wrote THIS blistering CHALLENGE to the skeptic—a challenge claiming that no one can thwart His Will?

Here in the Bible is One speaking who does not crystal-ball gaze, who does not merely guess what is going to happen, but One who claims to KNOW because HE HAS DETERMINED THE FUTURE. Since this One speaks forth through the

words of Scripture, here is the proof that the skeptic needs. If God can BACK UP His Word, if He can FULFILL the prophecies He uttered long ago for this 21st century—THEN THE SKEPTIC HAS PROVED THAT GOD MUST BE THE AUTHOR OF HIS WORD AS HE CLAIMS TO BE.

But if events are CONTRARY to the plain statements of Biblical prophecy—contrary to the claims of this "God"—then the skeptic has found the proof that the Bible is not infallible—that we cannot rely on it.

PROPHECY IS ONE PROOF UPON WHICH SCRIPTURE STANDS OR FALLS! Even the "God of the Bible" recognizes this fact. Here is what He says:

"Set forth your case, says the Lord; bring your PROOFS, says the King of Jacob.... And tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come" (Isaiah 41:21-22, RSV).

Yes, little mortal humans, STATE YOUR PROOFS! Can anyone but God foretell? Could the Bible be the work of humans alone, without the inspiration of God, and be filled with fulfilled prophecies written centuries, yes, millennia in advance?

God says, as it were, "Why YOU'RE nothing at all. Come on! Let's hear YOUR prophecies that we may see whether or not they turn out. Predict what is going to happen in the future, and let us watch and see whether YOU can foretell. Have YOU the power to bring it about as I have?

Are you a god? Do YOU rule the universe, you doubters? Can you make and unmake nations? Can you pronounce a sentence or a decree on a nation, AND BRING IT TO PASS?

That is the taunt of the God of the Bible to the DOUBTERS.

Facts Easily Demonstrated

Yes, fulfilled prophecy is the PROOF of divine revelation! If One, throughout the Bible, speaking and claiming to be God, can make prophecies and tell what is going to happen in the future to our cities, our nations, our world-ruling empires; then if it actually HAPPENS IN EVERY CASE, without a miss, no sane mind can deny that GOD must have spoken it.

If the Bible prophecies are absolutely sure, then THE FACTS CAN BE VERY EASILY DEMONSTRATED—which is what the skeptic or agnostic is afraid of. He wants to remain in his ignorance. He is proud to be an agnostic, or a doubter. He is proud of his ignorance! But YOU cannot afford to be in ignorance—your life is too valuable. There is too much at stake!

Now we are ready to study one of the most important lessons of the entire course.

Is your BIBLE in front of you? Have you several sheets of paper, and a pen or pencil, so you can MAKE NOTES to help you remember what you learn? If not, go get your Bible, and whatever else you need.

Now with your Bible, your paper, a good dictionary, and any other book you may need (mentioned in Lesson 4), here is the METHOD of study: Write down neatly on your notepaper the caption "Lesson 10" and UNDERSCORE it. Underneath, write down the heading of the first question section. Then, underneath that, number each question, and WRITE DOWN THE ANSWER TOGETHER WITH THE SCRIPTURES CONTAINING THE ANSWER. As an EXAMPLE for your first question, this is what you will write on your notepaper:

1. Romans 3:16 – "Destruction and misery are in their ways."

Also write in any thoughts or comments you want to remember. When you have finished this

question and have studied it and are sure you understand it, then read the material that follows. Write down all the answers that follow so you can fix them in your mind and REVIEW them later. The verses given you in this Course will establish a framework for ALL your Bible knowledge.

Remember, you are to spend TIME studying YOUR BIBLE with this Study the Bible Course. This will help you learn better.

LESSON 10

Proof One: Ancient Prophecies Fulfilled

There were many prophecies in the Bible that were fulfilled anciently.

Most people familiar with the Bible realize that Christians teach that Jesus was prophesied in the ancient Hebrew prophecies contained within the Old Testament. And that Christians claim Jesus fulfilled various of those prophecies in the New Testament.

But many do not realize that many ancient prophecies also had fulfillment in secular history. Here is an account of part of the 11th chapter of the Book of Daniel from the late Herbert W. Armstrong:

The angel says to Daniel, "Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will" (Dan. 11:2-3).

Actually there were 12 more kings in the Persian Empire, but only the first four following Cyrus were of importance for

the purpose of this prophecy. They were Cambyses, pseudo-Smerdis, Darius and Xerxes. It was the last, or Xerxes, who was the richest of all and stirred up war with Greece.

Then King Philip of Macedonia planned a great war to conquer the Persian Empire, with an army made up mostly of Grecians. He died before the plans were completed. But his son, Alexander the Great, took over his plans, and invaded Persia. He met the Persian army at the Battle of Issus, 333 B.C. (Dan. 8:2, 5-6). Then he swept down into Egypt, and then to a final crushing defeat of the Persian Empire at the Battle of Arbella, 331 B.C., after which Alexander marched on a conquest clear to India, sweeping all before him.

Notice now verse 4 of the prophecy: "And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those."

How marvelously—how accurately—that came to pass. We quote from one of the authoritative English-language histories published in the last century, *A Manual of Ancient History* (Student Series) by Rawlinson: "Cut off unexpectedly in the vigor of early manhood [the 33rd year of his age, June, 323 B.C.], he [Alexander] left no inheritor, either of his power or of his projects" (p. 237). The Empire was left leaderless and in confusion, but out of this emerged, by the year 301 B.C., four divisions, just as prophesied, as a result of a division of the Empire into four divisions by Alexander's generals. They were:

1. Ptolemy (Soter), ruling Egypt, part of Syria and Judea.
2. Seleucus (Nicator), ruling Syria, Babylonia and territory east to India.
3. Lysimachus, ruling Asia Minor.
4. Cassander, ruling Greece and Macedonia.

Thus was the prophecy of verse 4 fulfilled to the letter.

Now notice what follows. From here the prophecy foretells the activities only of two of these four divisions: Egypt, called "king of the south," because it is south of Jerusalem; and the Syrian kingdom, the king of the north, just north of Judea. It is because the Holy Land passed back and forth between those two divisions, and because their different wars were principally over possession of Judea, that the prophecy is concerned with them. Here is verse 5:

"And the king of the south [Egypt] shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion."

In history, we learn that the original Ptolemy I, called Soter, became strong and powerful, developing Egypt beyond the greatest dreams of Alexander. One of his princes, or generals, Seleucus Nicator, also became strong and powerful. And, in 312 B.C., taking advantage of Ptolemy's being tied up in a war, he established himself in Syria, and assumed the diadem as king.

Verse 6 says,

"And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of

the north to make an agreement [margin, "rights" or "equitable conditions," or "marriage union"]: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times."

Fulfilled to the Letter!

At the end of 50 years, this occurred exactly as described!

Syria's ruler, the king of the north, at this time was Antiochus II, called Theos. His wife was named Laodice. And, says Rawlinson's Ancient History, page 251, "Her influence...engaged him in a war with Ptolemy Philadelphus [king of the south], B.C. 260, which is terminated, B.C. 252, by a marriage between Antiochus and Bernice, Ptolemy's daughter."

The prophecy says "he that begat her" shall be given up. Also that she shall not retain the power of the arm, neither shall the king of the north, whom she married, stand. All three are to come to their end. Notice how accurately this came to pass.

Says Rawlinson's History, pages 251 and 252: "On the death of Philadelphus [he that begat her], B.C. 247, Antiochus repudiated Bernice, and took back his former wife, Laodice, who, however, doubtful of his constancy, murdered him to secure the throne for her son Seleucus (II) B.C. 246...Bernice...had been put to death by Laodice."

Nowhere in all the Bible is there so literal a prophecy, giving so many details of

future history. And to read an ancient history of these kingdoms is simply to see unfolded before your eyes, step by step, verse by verse, this marvelous prophecy. There can be no doubt of its right application!

The Holy Land Changes Hands

Next let us notice verse 7:

"But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate [margin, "in his office"], which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail."

"Out of a branch," or "shoot," of her roots. Her parents were her roots. Hence, this must be her brother, who next should occupy the throne of king of the south and fulfill this prophecy. Now listen to this accurate fulfillment, quoted word for word from the same page of Rawlinson's work (p. 252):

"Ptolemy Euergetes [the III, eldest son of Philadelphus (p. 272) and therefore Bernice's brother, a branch of her roots] invaded Syria, B.C. 245, to avenge the murder of his sister, Bernice.... In the war which followed, he carried everything before him."

The eighth verse of Daniel 11 says this king of the south would carry captives and vessels of silver and gold into Egypt, and continue to reign more years than the king of the north, who at that time was Seleucus II, and verse 9 says he shall return into Egypt. As verse 7 said he should "enter into the fortress of the king of the north," Ptolemy III did seize

the fortress of Syria, Seleucia, the port of Antioch, capital of the kingdom! Then he carried back to Egypt immense booty and 2,500 molded images and idolatrous vessels which, in 526 B.C. Cambyses had carried away from Egypt. He continued to rule until 222 B.C., while the king of the north, Seleucus II, died in 226 B.C.

When he died, his two sons took over the kingdom of the north; first Seleucus III, 226-223 B.C., who ruled only three years, and then his brother Antiochus III, called "the Great," 223-187 B.C. Both of these two sons of Seleucus II assembled immense forces to war against Egypt, avenge their father, and recover their port and fortress, Seleucia.

And this was accurately prophesied in verse 10:

"But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return and be stirred up [margin, "be stirred up again"], even to his fortress."

"And," continues verse 11,

"the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand."

In fulfillment of the latter part of verse 10, Antiochus the Great, after 27 years, recovered his fortress, Seleucia, and he also conquered the territory of Syria, as far as Gaza, including Judea. But the young Egyptian king, now Ptolemy IV (Philopater), was roused, and with an

army of 20,000 inflicted severe defeat on Antiochus the Great; and fulfilling verse 12, he killed tens of thousands and again annexed Judea to Egypt. But he was not strengthened, for he made a rash and speedy peace with Antiochus, and returned to dissipation, throwing away the fruits of victory. Says verse 12, "And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it."

For, as verse 13 continues,

"the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches."

It was "after certain years," or 12 years later, 205 B.C., that Ptolemy Philopator died, leaving his throne to an infant son, Ptolemy Epiphanes. Then Antiochus assembled a greater army, and won great victories.

He then made a treaty allying Philip of Macedonia with him, and others, against Egypt, and they wrested Phoenicia and southern Syria from the king of the south. In this they were assisted by some of the Jews. Josephus' Jewish history says many Jews helped Antiochus. But notice how accurately Almighty God had foretold this, hundreds of years before it happened!—

"And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall" (v. 14).

Read It in Your Own Bible!

To save space, the reader is asked from this point to read each verse of the prophecy from his own Bible, thus saving us reprinting the prophecy in full here. We give here only the facts in history.

Verses 15-16 — "the glorious land," of course, refers to Judea, the Holy Land. Antiochus the Great besieged and took Sidon from Egypt, ruined the interests of Egypt in Judea at the Battle of Mount Panium, 198 B.C., and then Antiochus took possession of Judea.

Verse 17 — "upright ones"...In 198 B.C., Antiochus arranged a marriage between his daughter, Cleopatra (not the Cleopatra of 31 B.C. in Egypt) and young Ptolemy Epiphanes, king of the south, by which he hoped subtly to gain complete possession of Egypt; but the plan failed.

Says Rawlinson, page 254, "Coele-Syria and Palestine promised as a dowry, but not delivered." Cleopatra did not truly stand on the side of Antiochus, for it was only a trick to gain possession of Egypt.

Verse 18 — and so Antiochus turned his attention in another direction and tried to conquer, 197 to 196 B.C., the islands and coasts of Asia Minor. But the Roman general, Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus, utterly defeated him at the Battle of Magnesia, 190 B.C.

Verse 19 — Antiochus next turned his attention to the fortresses of his own land, in the East and west. But, attempting to recruit his dissipated wealth by *the* plunder of the Oriental Temple of Belus, in Elymais, he was killed, 187 B.C. (Armstrong H.W. The Middle East in Prophecy. Worldwide Church of God, 1972)

The Book of Daniel was written around 540 or so B.C. Yet, notice that many prophecies in the 11th chapter of that book were clearly fulfilled historically. Most people, even those not particularly interested in history have heard of Alexander the Great and Cleopatra—and some of what they were involved in were predicted centuries in advance in the Bible.

Of course, there are skeptics and doubters who claim that the Book of Daniel was not written when it was but long after the events happened. Some will NOT accept the truth and not believe that anyone or even God can predict the future.

Yet, the God of the Bible can inspire prophets and make the prophecies come to pass!

Notice also the following from the late Church of God evangelist Leroy Neff where he mentioned about fulfillments including more about Alexander the Great:

Cyrus, ruler of Persia

The first example is that of Cyrus the Persian, the first ruler of the Persian empire, who lived in the sixth century B.C. The stories of Cyrus' birth and youth as recorded in the histories of the time are so remarkable that they seem almost like children's stories. Herodotus, the Greek historian of the fifth century B.C., recounts one of these stories, here summarized.

Astyages, the son of Cyaxeres, king of the Medes, had a daughter, Mandane. He became fearful because he dreamed that this daughter would bear a child who would rule in his place, not only his kingdom but all of Asia. He wanted to prevent this at all cost.

When Mandane had her first child, a son, Astyages instructed one of his trusted servants, Harpagus, to have the

child killed. Harpagus, not wanting to do such a horrible thing, entrusted the terrible responsibility to Mitrdates, a herdsman. Mitrdates, on finding that his own child had just been stillborn, took and reared Mandane's son as his own. When the boy was about 10 years old his true identity became known.

His grandfather, Astyages the king, now accepted him and in due time this boy, Cyrus, ascended the throne in about 558 B.C. By about 549 B.C. Cyrus had become king over all Media, and by about 548 B.C. he ruled all Persia; He conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. and the Persian empire succeeded the Babylonian empire.

This story would not be so remarkable by itself, but predictions about Cyrus are included in Bible prophecy. You will find these predictions in the last verses of Isaiah 44 and the first part of Isaiah 45.

"That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isa. 44:28).

Isaiah gave this prophecy almost two centuries before Cyrus made his proclamation about rebuilding God's Temple in Jerusalem!

"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah" (Ezra 1:2).

Not only did God name Cyrus long before he was born, He saw to it that

Satan did not succeed in having him put to death by his grandfather! He also saw that Cyrus issued the proclamation to rebuild the Temple, as God said he would! But there is more.

The two leaved gates

"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him—the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut" (Isa. 45:1).

Isaiah prophesied that God would make it possible for Cyrus to conquer the many kingdoms that ultimately made up his empire. Also, the "two leaved gates" would not be shut or locked. This refers to the remarkable way in which Cyrus was able to capture the city (and consequently the empire) of Babylon.

The large city of Babylon, with its massive high walls, appeared impregnable from the outside. When Cyrus' armies encamped around the city, the Babylonians only laughed! They could survive a siege of years.

Unbeknownst to the Babylonians, however, Cyrus' men were able to divert most of the Euphrates River, which normally flowed through massive gates into the city. Cyrus also had gotten a spy into the city, who on the appropriate night had the inner gates along the river unlocked. With the lowered river level, the army was able to invade the city by way of the river route and through these gates, taking the Babylonians by complete surprise. Part of the remarkable fulfillment of the prophecy about the "two leaved gates" is

described in Daniel 5, the rest in various secular histories.

Alexander's conquest

The second prophetic personality we will consider is Alexander of Macedon, also known as Alexander the Great. He was the first king of the Graeco-Macedonian empire. Upon the death of his father Philip in 336 B.C., he ascended the Greek throne, being only about 20 years old.

Two years later he entered Asia with about 30,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry. He put to flight superior Persian forces at the battle of Granicus and then in October, 333 B.C., he faced Darius III, the Persian king, who had an army 10 times greater than his own. This battle of Issus won him an overwhelming victory. Alexander later won a conclusive victory over Persia at the Battle of Arbela on Oct. 1, 331 B.C., even though Darius III fielded an army of more than one million men.

This young man went on to extend his empire to the Indus River. He died of fever when he was less than 34 years of age, after a reign of only about 13 years.

The prophecies about this man are found in Daniel, chapters 8 and 11. Part of this prophecy states: "And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power" (Dan. 8:5-6).

The "notable horn" represented Alexander (the first king of Grecia, verse 21) who conquered the "ram" (the king

of Persia, verse 20). Alexander is also referred to in Daniel 11:3-4.

This prophecy was given by Daniel in the sixth century B.C., but its fulfillment by Alexander did not occur until about two centuries later, in the fourth century B.C.!

Jews protected

An interesting sidelight of this prophecy concerns the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish people there. On Alexander's drive southward, after his conquest of Syria, he bypassed Jerusalem, continuing along the seacoast to Gaza, which he took in the fall of 332 B.C. After this he headed with his armies toward Jerusalem.

He had previously written Jaddua, the Jewish leader and high priest, requiring certain provisions. Jaddua replied that he had given an oath to King Darius of Persia that he could not violate as long as Darius lived. This greatly angered Alexander.

"Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience" (Josephus, Ant., Book XI, Chapter VIII, section 4).

Jaddua then exhorted the people to pray and offer sacrifices to God, whereupon God told him in a dream how to receive Alexander and his armies. Here is how the momentous meeting took place.

"Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his miter on his head, having the golden plate whereon, the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest."

Alexander then said:

"I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay.... And when the book of Daniel was shewed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended" (ibid., section 5).

As a result of these events, Alexander dealt kindly with the Jews. This interesting story gives a little more detail on how God brings about the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, sometimes in remarkable ways.

An abomination in God's Temple

The last event we will consider relates to Antiochus Epiphanes, who was king of Syria during the second century B.C.

After Alexander's death his empire was divided into four kingdoms (Dan. 7:6, 8:8, 22, 11:4). One of these four kingdoms was that of Syria. Here is what Daniel says about Antiochus:

"And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered" (Dan. 8:9-12).

This prophecy was fulfilled in a terrible way. Antiochus took over Jerusalem and the Temple. He stopped the daily sacrifices and forced pagan religion on the Jews. Here is one summary of the horrible details:

"The observance of the Sabbath, circumcision and abstinence from unclean food were forbidden under penalty of death. Mothers who had their infant sons circumcised were crucified with their babes hanged upon their necks. The daily sacrifice was made to cease. An altar to the Olympian Zeus was built upon the altar of burnt offering and sacrifice offered upon it. A herd of swine was driven into the temple and swine's flesh offered upon the altar. The Holy of Holies and its furniture were sprinkled with broth made from swine's flesh. The courts of the temple were polluted with indecent orgies"

(Ancient History in Bible Light, Miller, p. 214).

This time has rarely, if ever, been equaled in the history of Israel or Judah. Not only were the people butchered, even fried in huge pans, but Antiochus personally entered into the Holy of Holies in God's Temple and took away the gold vessels in the Temple. He erected a "Greek altar on the site of the old one on 25 December 167" (The New Bible Dictionary, article "Antiochus").

Finally Judas Maccabaeus, his brothers and the Jews were able to recapture Jerusalem three years later, cleanse the sanctuary (Temple) and reinstitute the worship of God.

It should be noted here, however, that this prophecy of Daniel 8:9-12 is dual. Antiochus fulfilled it in type, but it is even now awaiting a much more terrible fulfillment in this end time!

Prophecy for today

These three examples show that God not only knows the end from the beginning and has predicted the future, but He also sees to it that the prophecies are fulfilled.

Certainly many books could be written—have been written—to give all the historical details. There are scores of fulfilled prophecies about Christ alone, others about John the Baptist, Judas Iscariot and others. The fall of Israel and Judah were also foretold in great detail by Isaiah, Jeremiah and others. The fulfillment of the physical promises to Abraham is a matter of record.

The restoration of the Jews to Judea in the sixth century B.C., the rebuilding of

the Temple and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 are major prophecies that have been fulfilled. The rise and fall of ancient Babylon is another fulfilled prophecy.

But more important than these historical fulfillments is that prophecy is right now being fulfilled.

The fall of the modern descendants of ancient Israel (particularly Britain and the United States) is well under way. This was prophesied as early as the time of Moses (Lev. 26 and Deut. 28). This fall will lead to another captivity during a time called Jacob's trouble or the great tribulation. Following this tribulation, supernatural heavenly signs will announce the imminent return of Christ. Immediately after these signs will begin the "Day of the Lord," culminating in the actual return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Prophecy also shows that God will make a way of escape from all these horrors for his faithful servants who are "accounted worthy" (Luke 21:36).

We need to be about our Father's business, doing the Work He has asked us to do, cleaning up our personal lives so that we, together with others who have already qualified, may become a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27).

If we do, we will be able to escape all these terrible events and stand before the Son of man! (Fulfilled Prophecy God's Challenge to the Skeptic. Good News magazine, December 1980)

Proof Two: STRIFE Prophesied

One major factor stands out as a REASON why so many doubt Bible prophecy—it is the inherent

rebellious NATURE and ATTITUDE of human beings.

Prophecy seems so unreal to most people—so unlikely to happen—because it pictures a God who can become ANGRY with the sins of this world—a God who claims to know better than we how we OUGHT to live. Prophecy reveals a God who corrects the world because it has gone astray by setting up its own governments and ordaining its OWN LAWS CONTRARY TO GOD'S GOVERNMENT AND LAWS.

Undoubtedly the first fact we must face—if we are going to understand prophecy and WHO God really is—relates to HUMAN NATURE itself.

Here is the BASIC REASON FOR PROPHECY!

1. Romans 3:16, like many other statements of Scripture, IS A PROPHECY. What does it say?

Name the RESULTS of the WAYS WHICH HUMAN BEINGS LIVE. Is the whole world facing the inevitable results today? (See also Lesson 1, The cause of World Ills, Bible News Prophecy Magazine, Jan–Mar 2014, pp 17-19.)

2. Compare verse 15 with the preceding five verses.
3. What does the Bible prophesy about the possibility of HUMANITY establishing WORLD PEACE without the supernatural intervention of God? Verse 17. See also Jeremiah 6:13-15 Romans 3:13-18; Isaiah 59:8; Ezekiel 7:25-26; and 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6.
4. WHO claims to be able to make peace? Isaiah 45:7.
5. Are these verses obviously a DIRECT PROPHECY THAT GOD ALONE CAN BRING PEACE TO THE WORLD—that the world cannot establish peace without His supernatural intervention?
6. Do most people recognize these verses as prophecies? Do most people even believe these verses mean what they plainly say? How do you know that most people do not

believe what God says in these verses? Do they rather think that they THEMSELVES can bring world peace?

7. Do these verses, written from about 1940 to 2700 years ago, indicate that the One who claims to be the Author of the Bible KNEW THE END-RESULT of human ways and customs? Do PRESENT WORLD CONDITIONS prove that He did? (To see daily biblical analysis of current news and prophecy go to www.COGwriter.com/news.) Did God foretell, almost from the beginning of human history, what we see occurring about us today? Jude 14-15. Was Enoch a prophet? What did we learn in the introduction of this lesson about the duty of a prophet? Did Enoch rebuke "sinners" for their violent misdeeds? What is sin? 1 John 3:4. Did Enoch recognize that the Lord of heaven and earth would have to intervene in world affairs to convince the world that its ways are wrong? Jude 14-15.
8. Does the vast majority agree with God's predictions? Do YOU think that the world's ways can lead to peace and harmony among nations?

Consider the following:

Perilous times

The scourge of terrorism was predicted centuries ago in the pages of the Bible.

Jesus prophesied that conditions in the latter days would mirror the chaotic state of the earth in Noah's time—an evil and corrupt world filled with violence (Luke 17:26, Genesis 6:5,11).

The apostle Paul also warned, "In the last days perilous times will come" (2 Timothy 3:1). The meaning of this prophecy goes far beyond mere incidental crime.

"Make a chain," cried the prophet Ezekiel, "for the land is filled with crimes

of blood, and the city is full of violence" (Ezekiel 7:23).

Bible prophecies picture an end-time world filled with lawlessness, aggression and hate, a world split by factions and international disputes, an era of rampant, indiscriminate violence and murder inspired by Satan the devil, the original murderer (John 8:44). We are living in those very days!

Man, apart from God, cannot control terrorism.

As long as the evil influence of Satan remains on the earth, terrorism and crime will continue to escalate, despite man's attempts to stem it. Force will continue to rule the world. Man will continue to answer violence with violence. This is yet Satan's world (II Corinthians 4:4). (Stump K. How Terrorism Will be Stopped! Good News magazine, December 1985)

TERRORISM the Worst Is Yet to Come!

Suicide bombers threaten mayhem in the Middle East. And experts now warn about "state-supported terrorism." Where is it all headed?

Terrorist groups survive despite governmental pressures in much the same way as a troubled business survives in spite of economic difficulties. To "stay in business," terrorist groups have, in the past, robbed banks, kidnapped, extorted, even dealt in drugs or other contraband materials. But "local fund-raising" has proven unreliable for some groups. As a result, they have opted for another, more ominous way of augmenting their budgets: seeking out powerful sponsors to provide safe havens, training, weapons and money. In some cases

these sponsors have proven to be national governments—leading to what is now called "state-supported terrorism." Terrorists have become the means by which some powerful nations, desiring to avoid unwanted escalation or public outcry, can punish their enemies at a relatively small cost.

State sponsorship has presented a dangerous new face of *terrorism*. For one thing, the level of weaponry employed has advanced greatly. Crude pipe bombs have been replaced by sophisticated remotely-fired car bombs. Molotov cocktails are out; rocket-propelled grenades are in. But greater levels of finances and weaponry are not the only changes that have come on the scene. Targets have changed also. (Taylor D. *TERRORISM the Worst Is Yet to Come! Plain Truth*, May 1984)

Notice the following scriptures:

25 The sword shall destroy outside; There shall be terror within (Deuteronomy 32:25)

12 "Cry and wail, son of man; For it will be against My people, Against all the princes of Israel. Terrors including the sword will be against My people; Therefore strike your thigh. (Ezekiel 21:12)

25 Because you disdained all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, 27 When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. (Proverbs 1:25-27)

5 Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way (Ecclesiastes 12:5).

While many political, media, and other leaders refuse to believe the Bible, the reality is that those of us who believe the Bible realize that terrorism is prophesied.

Consider that we have seen increased escalation in 2015 and 2016. Terrorism was prophesied!

COMMENT: This prophecy is GOD'S STANDING CHALLENGE to the atheist and agnostic!

THE SKEPTIC AND DOUBTER CAN PROVE GOD A LIAR MERELY BY FINALLY AND PERMANENTLY ESTABLISHING PEACE AMONG HUMANITY WITHOUT GOD'S SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION! But the testimony of human history shows that throughout the past two thousand years, the nations of the world have NOT been able to defy this prophecy and establish permanent peace! (The Bible does tell of a time of a 'deal' that will bring peace to the Middle East for a few years, but it also says that the deal will be broken and various wars will later ensue in Daniel 9:27; cf. Daniel 11:31-44).

Here is actual VISIBLE EVIDENCE that God's Word is being fulfilled. But the world REFUSES TO RECOGNIZE THIS EVIDENCE! Of course the doubter may conclude that these verses predicting world strife were shrewd guesses based upon previous history! Human history does indicate it—but how many people really believe it?

Here is a prophecy which has stood for centuries, DARING ANY HUMAN BEING TO ALTER IT! The nations have spilled millions of gallons of human blood, spent thousands of millions of dollars, wasted precious time—all in a vain attempt to do what God said cannot be done. And we are to witness the final fulfillment of this prophecy when God will have to INTERVENE in human affairs to PREVENT WORLD ANNIHILATION and bring us world peace at last!

Atheists and agnostics are now living who will see that day! All Bible doctrine stands or falls on

this fundamental prophecy which God dares any man to break!

GOD'S Church Fulfills Prophecy

Even skeptics admit that the Bible has been completely written in its present form for over 19 centuries. THEREFORE ANYTHING IN THE BIBLE RELATING TO THE CHURCH WHICH JESUS SAID HE WOULD BUILD COULD NOT POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN FORGED DURING THE PAST FEW HUNDRED YEARS. We have many manuscripts proving that our present Greek New Testament text is the same as it was nearly 20 centuries ago.

What did Jesus say would happen to His Church? Would His Church be a great, powerful "Mother" Church from which would spring many PROTESTING "daughter" churches? Would His Church end in a babel of confusion—in hundreds of conflicting church denominations?

If Jesus is alive today—if He did not lie about His Church—if He stands back of every word He uttered, then we ought to find ample proof in FULFILLED prophecy about His Church. Here is the PROOF:

1. Did Jesus pray—and therefore PROPHECY—that His Church would be ONE BODY, united in perfect harmony as the Father and Jesus the Son are united in harmony? John 17:20-23 and verse 11. Did the Father always hear Jesus' prayers? John 11:41-42.

COMMENT: God Almighty has been answering Jesus' prayer for the last 1900 years! The true Church of God—which Jesus Christ built—exists today as ONE HARMONIOUS group of Spirit begotten Christians, composing the "Body of Christ." (Send for the FREE booklet on the *Continuing History of the Church of God* for more astounding proof!)

2. Then why are there so many denominations? If God has been answering Jesus' prayer, why are there so many

DIFFERENT churches—all in confusion and disharmony? Could these churches be PART of the ONE TRUE CHURCH which Jesus said He would build? Or are they the churches of this world MASQUERADING as the true Church of God? Are these many conflicting churches a PART OF THIS WORLD?—do they meddle in politics? In reform movements? Have they adopted the customs of this world? Was Jesus' Church to be A PART OF THIS WORLD'S CUSTOMS AND WAYS? John 17:14-16.

3. Then where did this confusion arise—where did these discordant professing "Christian" churches come from? Did Jesus prophesy that false ministers would CREEP into the true Church? Matthew 7:15. Did Peter also warn of these false teachers who would creep into the true Church unawares in an attempt to corrupt it? 2 Peter 2:1-3. Had they already entered the Church in Jude's time? Jude 3. 4. But were they KICKED OUT by the time John wrote? 1 John 2:18-19. Notice the Bible plainly states that these false ministers NEVER were a PART of the true Church Jesus founded!!

What Happened to the Early Church that Led to Modern Mainstream Christianity?

While we have a booklet that goes into this in more depth titled *Continuing History of the Church of God* (available for free online at www.ccog.org) a brief overview may be helpful here.

Jesus taught that the true church would be a "little flock" (Luke 12:32), hated by the world (Matthew 10:22), and persecuted (Matthew 10:23). He also taught only a few would find the way to eternal life in this age (Matthew 7:14; 20:16). The Apostle Jude indicates that the number of saints was relatively small (Jude 14), while the Apostle Paul called the small group a "remnant" (Romans 11:5).

In the first century, apparently a false apostle, who is now called Mark (not to be confused with

the biblical writer of the same name), preached an allegorical interpretation of scripture in Alexandria. Alexandria was one of the most important intellectual centers of the Roman Empire in ancient times and had much influence in the Greco-Roman world. The falsely titled "Epistle of Barnabus" came from Alexandria in the early second century and also preached allegorical interpretation of scripture (see its chapter 10:2). The second century Gnostic heretics Valentinus and Basilides were Alexandrian. In the 3rd century, enchantments (cf. Isaiah 47) and claimed 'Marian' messages also affected many.

Within the Roman Empire the religion of Mithraism was increasing in popularity while versions of Christianity also were. Some considered that the two religions were in competition with each other (though that was really only the case with the compromisers and the followers of Mithras). Mithras was a pagan sun-god. Many beliefs and practices associated with Mithraism started to rub-off on many who professed Christ in the second through fourth centuries.

According to the 18th century historian E. Gibbon, around 135 A.D., many who professed Christ in Jerusalem chose to be led by a Latin leader called Marcus who urged them to compromise with God's law (which Gibbon calls "the Mosaic law") in order to be tolerated by the Roman Emperor Hadrian. Certain compromises in Rome apparently occurred around the same time, apparently for the same reason.

The acceptance of some of the doctrines held by other heretics (such as Simon Magus, Marcion, and Montanus) spread to many who professed Christ. Various allegorical heretics, such as Valentinus, went from Alexandria to Rome and elsewhere and began spreading various Gnostic and semi-gnostic teachings. And while history shows that second century leaders from Asia Minor opposed these heretics and their teachings, many of them were tolerated, at least

for decades, by the main churches in Rome and Alexandria.

Part of the reason for that acceptance of certain Gnostic teachings was that it greatly increased the number of Gentiles into those churches. Notice what one historian wrote:

The Gnostics blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets...the Gnostics were imperceptibly divided into more than fifty particular sects, of whom the most celebrated appear to have been the Basilidians, the Valentinians, the Marcionites.... Each of these sects could boast of its bishops and congregations, of its doctors and martyrs; and, instead of the Four Gospels adopted by the church the heretics produced a multitude of histories in which the actions and discourses of Christ and of his apostles were adapted to their respective tenets. The success of the Gnostics was rapid and extensive. They covered Asia and Egypt, established themselves in Rome, and sometimes penetrated into the provinces of the West. For the most part they arose in the second century...

The Gentile converts, whose strongest objections and prejudices were directed against the law of Moses, could find admission into many Christian societies, which required not from their untutored mind any belief of an antecedent revelation. Their faith was insensibly fortified and enlarged, and the church was ultimately benefited by the conquests of its most inveterate enemies (Gibbon E. *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Volume III, Chapter XXVII. ca. 1776-1788).

While we do not agree with Gibbon that the true church "ultimately benefited" from this compromise as he indicated, this compromise did allow the mainstream Greco-Roman

churches to “enlarge” as Gibbon wrote and become the majority of those who professed Christ.

Although many seem to accept blending of pagan ideas with their understanding of Christianity, this is not the way it was supposed to be. Notice, for one example, one of the accomplishments of Nehemiah:

30 I cleansed them of everything pagan.
(Nehemiah 13:30)

However, many who professed Christ in the first few centuries did not share Nehemiah's view as they included pagan concepts in their faith. Jesus Himself warned about adopting pagan practices of prayer (Matthew 6:7). Christians are not supposed to have the "spirit of the world" nor love its practices (1 John 2:15).

Despite biblical warnings, in the second century, one or more semi-gnostic schools developed in Alexandria, including the one headed by the semi-gnostic Clement of Alexandria and then Origen, whose teachings greatly influenced professing Christians in the Greco-Roman world. However, many of the teachings of the main school there have been condemned as heretical, even by Catholic and Protestant sources—and although many had pagan ties, many who profess Christianity still have been influenced by them.

COMMENT: The Bible warns about DECEIVERS who crept into the Church under FALSE PRETENSE. They pretended to be—they masqueraded as—sheep.

These wolves in sheep's clothing sought to enter the true Church, take it over, SUBSTITUTE their own pagan Babylonish Mysteries for God's true teachings and commandments, and make it still appear as though it were Christ's true Church!! It was a great diabolically inspired pagan movement to stamp the name of Christ on their worldly, pagan religion!

The apostle Paul branded them as, in true FACT, the ministers of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Yet they palmed themselves off as the apostles of Christ—but they were FALSE apostles (verse 13).

When Jude wrote, about 67 A.D., they had already crept in by stealth and false pretense, turning GRACE into LICENSE to disobey God's Law (Jude 4). In their letters, James and Peter spoke of this opposition against God's Law. The apostle John combated it in his letters, written in the 90'S A.D. By that time these imposters had come and GONE! But now they claimed that THEY, and their followers, NOT the true Church of God, constituted the original "Christianity," and the ONLY original true Church. But they NEVER were any PART of the TRUE Church which Jesus founded! (1 John 2:19.)

4. Did the world begin to listen to the heresies and fables of those false teachers, rather than listen to the Truth of God? 1 John 4:5. Is this true of the world today?
5. Did Jesus prophesy that MANY today, not the few, would be deceived? Matthew 24:4-5 and Mark 13:5-6. What does Luke 21:8 say? Do the many—or do the FEW—find the way of peace that leads to eternal life? Matthew 7:13-14. Does this sound like the majority of professing Christians really belong to the true Church of God today? Do these prophecies declare that THE MANY are PRESENTLY ensnared by this Babylon of professing "Christian" denominations?

COMMENT: In Jesus' prophecy for TODAY He foretold of deceitful ministers—with their false "churches"—coming in His name, posing as Christ's true ministers, professing Christianity, yet REJECTING the message Jesus brought from heaven.

This fact explains why the knowledge of the truth has become lost to the world and has been PRESERVED by the true Church of God. For ONLY God's Church LIVES by every word of God,

recognizing and submitting to Christ's supreme authority over its collective members!

6. Though the world was to corrupt the truth—even though it accepted the NAME OF CHRIST—did Jesus FORETELL that His Church would be preaching the true gospel of the Kingdom of God in the closing hours of this age? Matthew 24:14.
7. Is God's Church—the (*Continuing*) “Church of God”—preaching that gospel today from its headquarters in California? Does Jesus' Church have the backing of powerful worldly financial interests? Or does it have only "a LITTLE strength" which GOD INSPIRES to be used WISELY in a MIGHTY WAY to preach Christ's warning message to the world? Revelation 3:8.

COMMENT: The existence of God's TRUE Church today is yet another proof that God exists!

These are but a few of the HUNDREDS of scriptures which prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that WHAT JESUS PROPHESED would happen to HIS CHURCH IS HAPPENING TODAY! And the world has been turned to fables which are masquerading under the guise of "gospel truth" AS JESUS PROPHESED!

History shows that there were two major groups that professed Christ in the second/third/fourth centuries.

One group included claimed Greco-Roman (Orthodox and Roman Catholic) saints, such as Polycarp of Smyrna, Thraseas of Eumenia, Apollonius of Ephesus, and Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Serapion of Antioch, and Nepos of North Africa. Those in this group claimed such doctrines/practices such as Passover on the 14th, the avoidance of unclean meats, the Sabbath, binitarianism, the millennium, the correct New Testament canon, avoidance of military participation, and the belief in the scriptures. They understood and promoted the true gospel.

The other group included many who killed and ordered persecutions. This group included those who blended Gnostic thought, allegory, Mithraism, and a disregard for certain biblical prophecies with their version of “Christianity.” They tended to endorse a different gospel.

Both groups existed in the second, third, and fourth centuries. In the second century, the first group was apparently the largest until after compromise and persecutions, the second group gained predominance in many areas (see also our free booklet on the *Continuing History of the Church of God*).

Both groups (with their numerous parts) have existed throughout the ages.

Both groups exist today.

One (the Greco-Romans) teaches that both of the early groups were part of it. The other (the true Church of God) teaches that only one of the early two groups was faithful, and it traces itself through that one only.

8. Did Jesus Himself teach that there would be two groups and that the real group would be small? Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 12:32.

So, the majority, according to Jesus, would end up in the wrong group and only a relative few to the actual Christian group.

9. Did the Apostle Paul teach the same thing about this age? Romans 11:5

It is the genuine Church of God, as represented by the *Continuing* Church of God, that claims ties to the Apostle John and a long list of original doctrines and leaders, including those listed in this lesson. Leaders who held positions that the Greco-Roman churches currently claim are heretical.

Most other groups claiming to be Christian, directly or indirectly claim to have ties to the allegorist group (and accepted many, though not all, of the decisions of their councils prior to 700 A.D.), or basically wish to act like they are somehow faithful even though they did not come from either of the two churches that this article discusses.

Since Jesus made it clear that His faithful church would be a "little flock" (Luke 12:32) that could never die out (Matthew 16:18), only a small group that came from the original group could be the true church today. That church today is best represented by the *Continuing Church of God*.

10. Did Jesus also foresee a time when God would have to intervene in world affairs to stop the impending threat of total annihilation of human life? Matthew 24:21-22. (We discussed this in the very first lesson of this Course.)

COMMENT: Here again is added proof that God does exist! He foreknew—He planned—the events now taking place before our very eyes. He is the One responsible for the news headlines you read daily—HEADLINES THAT POINT TO THE RAPID FULFILLMENT OF ALL THE OUTSTANDING PROPHECIES AS SOON AS THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM IS PREACHED TO ALL THE WORLD AS A WITNESS!

Proof Three: Increased Knowledge and Population Prophesied

Many discount the ancient historical fulfillment of biblical prophecies. Those who do not claim to be Christian do not care if or how Jesus fulfilled ancient prophecies. Many do not care about prophecies related to the true Church of God.

But there are a couple of prophecies that have been fulfilled since the New Testament was

written that should give even non-believers enough pause to consider that God's hand was behind them.

Consider the following from Daniel was told related to the last days:

4 "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." (Daniel 12:4)

Modern travel is so much faster than humans in Daniel's day thought was physically possible.

With the creation and utilization of modern computers, as well as the internet, there has been a knowledge explosion all over the world.

Was that prediction just a lucky guess?

Consider another end time prophecy:

13 Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. 16 Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. (Revelation 9:13-16)

When the above prophecy was written, there were not 200 million people on the planet, let alone enough men to make an army of that size. That prophecy, also, was for the end times.

The Bible also warned about geopolitical and military alliances that we are seeing forming today.

No reasonable person would consider these to

have been 'lucky guesses' made over 1900 years ago, especially when combined with the other prophecies that have been confirmed.

The LESSON of Prophecy

Before we complete this lesson of the *Study the Bible Course*, it is vital that we understand one more fact.

Now that we have demonstrated by fulfilled prophecy that God DOES exist, we are brought face to face with the recognition that God is Supreme Ruler. As Supreme Ruler He commands our unconditional surrender to Him and our TOTAL OBEDIENCE TO HIS LAWS AND HIS GOVERNMENT—to His WAY of Life. This is the MESSAGE OF ALL THE PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN!

The prophets were NOT religious enthusiasts, reformers of worldly religions and morals, or politicians who guessed about the future in order to influence the world of their day. This idea is the common mistaken concept of modernists and of rationalistic theologians.

The prophets were rather WATCHMEN, GUARDIANS of God's truth—sent to warn individuals, cities, nations and the world of the results of their evil ways—the results that sin brings. The prophets received revelations from a merciful God to deliver to men BEFORE God poured out His judgments on the people and the nations that revolted against His Will and did what seemed right in their own eyes. God's watchmen warn TODAY! They warn the nations to yield to God who alone knows right from wrong.

PROPHECY FORETELLS THE CORRECTIVE PUNISHMENT God promises to send because He LOVES human beings and WANTS TO BRING THEM TO THEIR SENSES. "Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). God promises, through prophecy, to give us

ample advance WARNING TO TURN TO GOD'S WAYS which are BEST FOR mankind.

The entire lesson of prophecy is contained in 2 Kings 17:6-23:

"... Assyria captured Samaria, and...carried the Israelites away"—Why?"—"because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God...and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations"—they took up a way of life that SEEMED right to the nations round about them—"And the people of Israel did secretly against the Lord their God things that were not right.... yet the LORD WARNED ISRAEL AND JUDAH BY EVERY PROPHET AND EVERY SEER"—God spoke through the prophets and those who saw visions—"saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS AND MY STATUTES, in accordance with all the law which I commanded your fathers, AND WHICH I SENT TO YOU BY MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS'" (verses 6-13, RSV).

God's prophets were His spokesmen, revealing His law to a forgetful and rebellious nation.

"But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God...And the Lord rejected ALL the descendants of Israel...AS HE HAD SPOKEN BY ALL HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS" (verses 14, 20, 23, RSV).

THE PROPHETS LAID BARE THE INNER REASONS FOR EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES. They explained WORLD EVENTS in their connection with the government and the Laws of God.

The ultimate PURPOSE for prophecy is to bring about the complete supremacy of GOD'S WILL among all human beings. It foretells to us TODAY that since most men will not voluntarily surrender themselves to the authority and laws of God, He will have to intervene personally in

world affairs to PUNISH THE DISOBEDIENT and BRING PEACE TO THE NATIONS.

Properly paying attention to prophetic events helps one to be ready for Jesus (Luke 21:36;). Additionally, the reality of prophecy and world events is also intended to be a reflective exercise to get Christians to examine their lives enough to change as they should (cf. Romans 13:11-14; 2 Peter 3:10-13).

Another reason to pay attention to prophecy and events is so that you will not be carried away with false prophetic and other teachings. That is also part of the reason that there is a ministry, including prophets:

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.(Ephesians 4:11-16)

Throughout the years, various ones have claimed that the end was sooner that it was.

One of most famous in the 21st century were the pronouncements of the now deceased Harold Camping. But those who properly understood

current events in the light on biblical prophecy could easily prove he was in error.

There have been, and still are, others as well.

But no matter what anyone says, the world will not end this year, or next year, or even the year after.

How can I be sure?

Well, for one reason, the Apostle Peter wrote:

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed (2 Peter 1:19, KJV).

This is the case with the *Continuing* Church of God.

Part of the reason to watch events and understand Bible prophecy is so that we will not be affected by those who promote false doctrines or claim that the end can come before the Bible allows it (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:2; Ephesians 4:14).

Prophecy also assures us that God is in charge and that His will will be done. The faithful do not have to fear what humans can say or do (Luke 12:32).

The Bible is clear that certain events need to occur before the end comes. And that includes us all growing in “grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18, NKJV).

Part of that knowledge is prophetic. And part of that biblical knowledge tells us that the world will not end before the events that the Bible shows must first come to pass.

Why prophecy?

To keep us vigilant, physically and spiritually, and also so we will not be swayed by others who do not have sufficient love of the truth.

Let's re-examine Romans 3 to fully understand WHY God has prophesied punishment for our world.

1. Is it natural for human beings to understand the purpose of life? Romans 3:11, first part.
2. Can man, apart from the possibility of God's help, naturally seek after God and discover Him? Verse 11, last part. Does this plainly indicate that man could NEVER find God unless He REVEALED HIMSELF? Is this what we learned from Lesson 9 of this Course?
3. Now notice verse 12. Have all human beings gone the way that seems right to them? Is this God's Way? Does God say that humanity has STRAYED from His Way?
4. Does verse 12 imply that God ORIGINALLY revealed His way to man and that man STRAYED from it? How else could they "have all TURNED aside"? Then are the nations BLINDED in ignorance and superstition? Are they of any profit to themselves or to God the way they are? As usual, be sure to write down the answer to each of these questions on your notepaper.
5. How many by nature do good instead of evil? Last part of verse 12. Would you say the world believes this?

COMMENT: The SKEPTICS AND ATHEISTS obviously REJECT PROPHECY BECAUSE THEY DO NOT WANT TO DO THE WILL OF GOD! They want to do their own will which brings only heartache, suffering, sickness, war and death! Others do not believe it affects them, even though they claim to believe the Bible.

Even the Fundamentalists who profess to know God, LIE because they REFUSE TO DO HIS COMMANDMENTS: "He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a LIAR, and the TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM" (1 John 2:4). These people TWIST the meaning of prophecy so they can continue in their willful rebellion against God's laws.

It is not enough to recognize that God exists. Prophecy proves that once we recognize He does

exist, we are under obligation to RECOGNIZE HIS AUTHORITY and OBEY His Will which He has expressed in His commandments, statutes and judgments!

It should also be mentioned because the bulk of true Christians do not support God's true work in the end times, that they will NOT properly understand key prophecies, despite what their Laodicean (Revelation 3:14-22) and Sardisian (Revelation 3:1-6) leaders tell them.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 2:7,11,17,29;3:6,13,22).

Seven times in Revelation, Jesus specifically tells those associated with the true Church of God to pay attention to the messages to the churches. Most of these messages were both prophetic and corrective.

Yet, even most Christians do not properly understand what Jesus was saying or understand enough of the truths about prophecies which will affect them in the 21st century.

GOD DOES EXIST!

You now have the facts in briefest summary—facts which prove that God MUST EXIST. He must exist in order to have inspired the men who wrote the Bible centuries ago.

He must still exist and rule over the nations in order to bring His prophecies to fulfillment!

Only a LIVING, ACTIVE GOD could keep the agnostics and atheists from doing what God said no man can do!

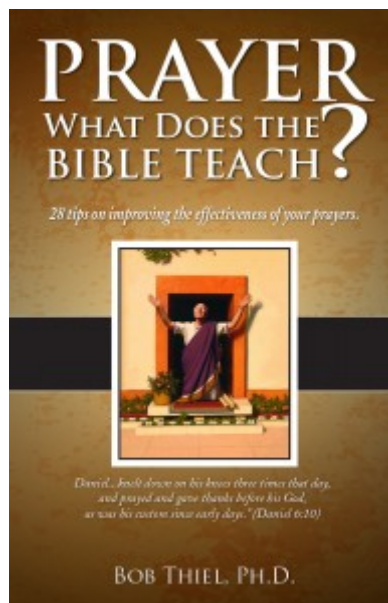
Not even all the power of the United Nations can rebuild what God foretold "shall not be rebuilt."

These prophecies could not have been written after the events occurred. (We have purposely

left out any prophecy which the agnostics FALSELY claim was written AFTER the event.)

The prophets who wrote the Scriptures are dead. They could not fulfill their writings. Only a living, all-powerful God could have intervened over the centuries to bring every one of these prophecies to fulfillment without exception! NOT ONE HAS FAILED!

Twenty-Eight Tips for More Effective Prayers: Part 5



Continuing Church of God booklet on prayer

By Bob Thiel

This is the fifth part of a multi-part series on prayer.

It has been said that, "The Church of God goes forward on its knees." This has basically been used as an admonition to tell Christians that they need to pray. But how?

In the previous articles, prayer was defined, and twenty-one tips were discussed. In this article, three additional tips, starting with what we will call tip number twenty-two are covered.

Tip Number 22: Pray for Secular Leaders

In the Old Testament, some leaders asked for God's people to

pray for them, and they did (1 Kings 13:6; Ezra 6:8-10).

What about the New Testament? While some people believe that the problems humanity has would be best solved by voting or rioting, the Bible says we need to pray for our secular leaders and those in the government who have authority over aspects of our lives.

¹ Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. ³ For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior (1 Timothy 2:1-3).

Many of us face complications with governmental officials and their policies. Are you praying for them like you should? As far as international governmental matters go, the Bible also says to "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalms 122:6).

Tip 23: Put Jesus in Your Prayers

There is only one name under heaven by which we can be saved: Jesus (Acts 4:10,12). We need to put Jesus in our prayers. This does not mean that we are mainly to pray to Jesus, though that can be done (e.g. Acts 7:59), we need to realize that we can come to the Father because of what Jesus has done for us.

The Book of Hebrews teaches:

¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

We can, and should, come boldly before the throne of grace, because of Jesus.

Notice also what Jesus taught:

¹³ And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:13-14)

Are there limits? Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote:

¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, (Philippians 2:5)

¹ Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

If you have repented, been baptized, and received God's Holy Spirit, the blood of Jesus has washed you clean (Revelation 1:5). If you will truly imitate Jesus, you can do all things through Him. Try to be and think like Jesus.

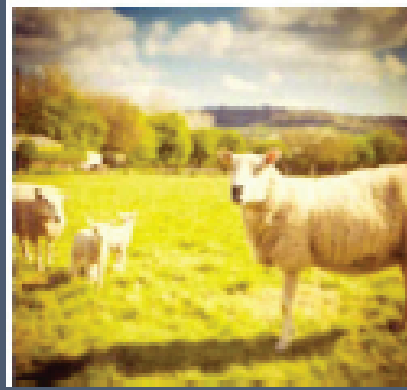
The Apostle John wrote:

²³ Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. (John 16:23)

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we should pray, ask the Father, in Jesus name/authority. I normally close my prayers by asking for all I prayed for in the name/authority of Jesus, in accordance with God's will. Jesus is the only mediator between humankind and God (1 Timothy 2:5): do not pray to/ through His mother or others.

More information on prayer can be found in our booklet *Prayer: What Does the Bible Teach?*

Fulfilling Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:19-20



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Daily Bible News Prophecy www.cogwriter.com

CCOG.ASIA This is a website targeted towards Asia.

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CCOG.IN This is a website targeted towards those of Indian heritage.

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CDLIDD.ES La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the Spanish
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