



# *Understanding* **BIBLE PROPHECY**

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## **2018 Edition of *Understanding Bible Prophecy***

The 2017 and 2018 editions of *Understanding Bible Prophecy* represent a major reconstruction of the course based on extensive new study and research over the past few years, including research in Israel itself.

We have added memory verses for most of the sections.

The section on “Interpretation of Prophecy” has been extensively reworked and enlarged.

The section on the Covenants has been entirely reworked and greatly enlarged.

The section on “Messianic Prophecies” has been greatly enlarged.

The old sections on “The Kingdom of God” and “A Prophetic Overview of the Future” have been reworked and greatly expanded under the title of “Great Prophetic Events of the Future.” In this section we cover the Valley of Dry Bones, the Rapture, the Tribulation, the Antichrist, the Conversion of Israel, the Battle of Armageddon, the Resurrections and Judgments, Christ’s Kingdom, and the New Jerusalem.

For 2018, there are the following new sections: The ministry of the prophets, the prophets from Adam to Malachi, the division of the writing prophets, the divine inspiration of the prophets, how God spoke to the prophets, the repetition of the prophets, the school of the prophets, the chronological order of the prophets, and the prophetic writings as legal documents.

## **Review Questions**

A lot of time and effort has gone into the creation of the review questions which are designed to draw the student's attention to the most important points of the lessons and to help him remember these points after the course is finished. Each question deals with things that the Bible student needs to keep in mind beyond the life of the course. The review questions go over all of the important points in the lessons, thus pointing the student's attention to the most significant material.

The questions help to focus the student's attention on the things that he should take away from the course and helps him remember these things by providing a means by which he can easily go back to test himself.

If you take the courses by yourself, don't skip over the very important review questions. Find someone who will test you and let them present the review questions to you. It is a very important part of the learning process.

For the classroom setting, the teacher can use our review questions (plus his own, of course) to create appropriate sectional and final tests at the learning level desired.

# Introduction

This course is an introduction and overview of Bible prophecy. In the *Way of Life Bible Commentary Series* we study the prophets themselves (e.g., Isaiah to Malachi).

## Some Introductory Facts about Bible Prophecy

1. The main theme of Bible prophecy is Jesus Christ (Re. 19:10; Lu. 24:44-46). If we study prophecy and fail to see Jesus, we have missed the main message. The main purpose of the Bible is to reveal God, and the fullest revelation of God is Christ, God manifest in the flesh. The reason God has given His revelation to mankind is that fallen men might be brought back into right relationship with Him through Christ, that we might know Him personally and grow in our knowledge of Him forever. John 17:3 says that eternal life is to know God in Christ, and this knowledge is revealed in the Bible. Ephesians 1:8-17 says the mystery of God's will, which is contained in Scripture, is to redeem sinners and ultimately to bring all things together in Christ. This is God's great plan that is revealed in the Bible and it will culminate in the new heaven and new earth.

2. Prophecy in the Bible refers not merely to the foretelling of future events, but to divine revelation in general. The "more sure word of prophecy" refers to the entire New Testament, not merely to future events (2 Pe. 1:19-21).

3. There are two types of prophesying: *forthtelling and foretelling*, or *preaching and prediction*. The prophets of old practiced both aspects. Bible prophecies are composed of a mixture of preaching and prediction, forthtelling and foretelling. You can see this in any of the prophets. Isaiah chapter one, for example, is mostly forthtelling (verses 2-24).

Only verses 25-30 are foretelling of future events. New Testament prophecy is also composed both of preaching (forthtelling) and foretelling (1 Co. 14:3). With the completion of the Canon of Scripture, the gift of prophetic foretelling ceased, but there remains the gift of preaching or forthtelling (2 Timothy 4:2).

## How Bible Prophecies Are Different from Extra-biblical Prophecies

1. *Bible prophecies are clear and detailed rather than ambiguous and vague.*

*Names are given in Bible prophecy.* In Isaiah 44:28 - 45:4, King Cyrus is mentioned by name 150 years before he ascended to the throne.

*Locations are given in Bible prophecy.* For example, Micah 5:2 gives the name of Jesus' birthplace 700 years before He was born.

*Minute details are given in Bible prophecy.* Psalm 22, for example, describes Jesus' crucifixion in amazing detail 1,000 years before He was born.

*Dates are given in Bible prophecy.* Daniel 9:24-27 tells exactly when Christ would come.

But when it comes to prophecies outside of the Bible, you typically find vagueness and generality.

Consider **Nostradamus** (1503-1566), one of the most famous non-Bible prophets. His messages are described as "obscure" even by those who believe in him. Consider one of his most famous prophecies:

“Beasts ferocious from hunger will swim across rivers:  
The greater part of the region will be against the Hister,  
The great one will cause it to be dragged in an iron cage,  
When the German child will observe nothing” (centuries  
#2, quatrain #24).

Some have said that this is a prophecy about Hitler and World War II, yet it is so vague and obscure that it could refer to practically anything.

*Astrological prophecies*, too, are usually so vague that they are meaningless. For example, a prophecy for those born under the sign of Aquarius might be as follows: “Several friends may have the feeling that you’ve been ignoring them,” or, “You are going to meet a person soon who will be important in your life.” That is so vague that it would be true for most people at any time.

## *2. Bible prophecies have never failed.*

The surety of Bible prophecy stands in great contrast to the uncertain predictions of astrologers and soothsayers.

Consider **the Oracle of Delphi**. This was the high priestess at the Apollo temple in Delphi, Greece. Croesus, king of the great Lydian Empire, consulted the oracle about whether he would be victorious over the Persians. The oracle replied, “If Croesus sends a great army against Persia, a mighty empire will fall.” This vague statement is a “win-win” prophecy for the soothsayer, since regardless of which empire fell, the prophecy would hold true! Croesus took the prophecy to mean that *he* would be successful, but he was defeated, and it was his empire that fell. When Philip of Macedonia consulted the Delphi oracle in 336 BC about his planned expedition against Persia, she replied, “The bull is ready for slaughter, the end is near, the sacrificer is present.” This obscure nonsense is



typical of pagan “prophecies.” If the prophetess had said, “You will soon die and your son will conquer Persia,” then it would have been a true prophecy of real significance.

Consider **Jeane Dixon** (1918-1997), a famed Roman Catholic psychic and astrologer. When she was a child, Dixon’s mother took her to a gypsy fortuneteller, who predicted that she would be a famous seer. She supposedly foretold the assassination of President Kennedy, but we have never seen evidence of that. Mostly, she made false predictions. She erroneously predicted, for example, that the Soviets would beat the U.S. to the moon, that World War III would begin in 1958, that there would be a cure for cancer in 1967, that labor leader Walter Reuther would run for president in 1964, and that President Bush would win the presidential election in 1992 (actually Bill Clinton did).

Consider **Edgar Cayce** (1877-1945). He a famous psychic who gave prophecies while in a trance state, but his prophecies were more typically false than true. He said, for example, that China would be converted to Christianity by 1968, and he predicted the arrival of Armageddon in 1999.

Consider **astrology**. Those who have depended upon astrological forecasts have usually been disappointed. Two famous astrologers in Britain said that World War II would not happen. An astrologer named Naylor, whose predictions appeared in the London *Sunday Times*, said, “In this column, for years, I have constantly laboured these points: Hitler’s horoscope is not a war-horoscope ... there will be no war” (August 27, 1939). Another British astrologer, Edward Lyndoe, said: “I see absolutely no signs of a Great War during 1939” (*The People*, January 1, 1939, p. 11). Hitler started World War II later that year.

## **The School of the Prophets**

Samuel was the first prophet in Israel (Ac. 3:24; Heb. 11:32). In his day the first school of the prophets was set up (1 Sa. 19:20). By Elisha's day there were schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho (2 Ki. 2:3, 5). Anathoth ("echoes") was a city of prophets three miles north of Jerusalem. Jeremiah lived there (Jer. 1:1). It was the birthplace of two of David's top soldiers, Abiezer (2 Sa. 23:27) and Jehu (1 Ch. 12:3).

Today Anathoth is a barren rocky hill that is used by Arabs for grazing sheep and. It still lies in desolation today from the destruction at the hands of the Babylonians 2,600 years ago. There are remnants of ancient walls, foundations, and wells. God had pledged that Anathoth would be judged because of the plot to kill Jeremiah (Jer. 11:21-23).

"... bands of youths seem to have gathered around experienced and accredited prophets, forming small colonies around them, learning from them, and seeking to imbibe their spirit.. ... These schools, moreover, were centres of theocratic ideas and ideals from which consecrated young men went out to exert considerable influence in the nation, and to hold up the torch of Divine truth amid the dark days of apostasy. It seems likely, too, that sacred music and poetry were cultivated at these schools, and that sacred traditions were here treasured and transmitted both orally and in writing" (J. Sidlow Baxter).

## **The Chronological Order of the Prophets**

The Prophets wrote from the time during the division of Israel's kingdom to the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian Captivity.

The exact date of the prophets cannot be known with certainty in every case, but the following is according to James Ussher's chronology:

1. Prophets that ministered before the exile to Babylon

Obadiah (887 BC) (to the northern tribes)

Jonah (862 BC) (to Nineveh)

Joel (800 BC) (to the northern tribes)

Amos (787 BC) (to the northern tribes)

Hosea (785-725 BC) (to the northern tribes)

Isaiah (760-698 BC)

Micah (750-710 BC)

Nahum (713 BC)

Zephaniah (630 BC)

Jeremiah (629-588 BC)

Habakkuk (626 BC)

2. Prophets that ministered during the exile to Babylon

Ezekiel (595-574 BC)

Daniel (607-534 BC)

3. Prophets that ministered after the exile to Babylon

Haggai (520 BC)

Zechariah (520-518 BC)

Malachi (397 BC)

## **The Prophetic Writings as Legal Documents**

There are many purposes for the major and minor prophets. God used the prophets to reveal His character. God used the prophets to warn Israel and call her to repentance. God used

the prophecies as evidence of His existence and power. He used the prophets to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

Another purpose of the prophets is to create eternal legal documents as testimonies of God's dealings. These documents will stand forever as a record of and a justification for God's dealings with Israel and the nations. There were many other prophets who spoke in God's name, but the 16 (Isaiah through Malachi) were chosen by God as a representation of the whole. From these historical documents it is clear that God was perfectly just in His dealings. In an effort to bring Israel to repentance, God called and called and called and called. He beseeched and pleaded and warned and used every type of argument. In God's name, the prophets pleaded as a mother and roared as a lion. Israel had zero excuse.

At times, the repetition found in the prophets can seem almost tedious and unnecessary, but every word is essential to establish God's eternal business.

In the church, a word is established in the mouth of two or three witnesses (Mt. 16:16). How much more is God's Word established by the mouth of these 16 imminent witnesses!

## **Unfulfilled Bible Prophecies**

In my personal study Bible I have marked the unfulfilled prophecies by bracketing them with a red pencil. I have also marked various major events with colored pencils. I use brown for verses pertaining to the day of the Lord, light blue for the Messianic passages, green for passages referring to the remnant, orange for the New Covenant, dark blue for the regathering of Israel, yellow for passages describing the millennial kingdom, and red for the second coming.

As a study project, the student can go through the book of Zechariah and mark the unfulfilled prophecies without looking at the following list.

**Genesis** 12:7; 13:14-17; 15:17-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18; 26:2-5; 28:12-15; 35:9-13

**Deuteronomy** 30:1-10

**2 Samuel** 7:13-16

**Psalms** 1:5-6; 2:1-12; 9:1-20; 10:12-18; 14:7; 18:4-19, 43-50; 21:4-13; 22:22-31; 23:6; 24:7-10; 25:13; 37:17-18, 20, 22, 28-29, 34, 38; 45:3-17; 46:2-11; 47:1-9; 48:1-14; 50:1-6; 51:19; 53:6; 58:9-11; 60:2-3, 6-12; 65:1-5; 66:1-4; 67:1-7; 68:20-35; 69:32-36; 71:20-24; 72:1-19; 73:27; 75:8-10; 76:1-12; 79:13; 86:9; 94:23; 96:11-13; 97:1-12; 98:1-9; 99:1-5; 100:1-5; 101:1-8; 102:12-22, 26-28; 107:40-43; 108:1-13; 110:1-7; 112:10; 121:1-7; 125:1-5; 126:1-6; 128:1-6; 129:4; 130:8; 132:13-18; 138:4-5; 145:1-13, 19-21; 146:7-10; 147:2-3, 12-15; 148:14; 149:1-9

**Isaiah** 1:25-31; 2:1-5, 10-22; 4:1-6; 5:26-30; 6:11-13; 8:14-22; 9:7; 10:20-27; 11:4-16; 12:1-6; 13:1-16; 14:1-27; 16:1-5; 17:6-8, 12-14; 18:7; 19:1-25; 22:20-25; 23:18; 24:1-23; 25:1-12; 26:1-21; 27:1-13; 28:1-6, 14-22; 29:5-8, 17-24; 30:18-33; 31:2-9; 32:1-8, 15-19; 33:2-24; 34:1-17; 35:1-10; 40:1-11; 41:10-20; 42:1-17; 43:1-21, 25-26; 44:1-8, 21-27; 45:14-25; 46:12-13; 48:20; 49:5-26; 51:3-11, 22-23; 52:1-15; 53:12; 54:1-17; 55:5, 12-13; 56:1-8; 57:13-19; 59:16-21; 60:1-22; 61:1-11; 62:1-12; 63:1-6; 65:8-25; 66:5-24

**Jeremiah** 3:14-19; 4:19-31; 10:10-11; 16:14-21; 23:3-8; 24:4-7; 25:26-38; 30:3-11, 16-24; 31:1-14, 16-40; 32:37-44; 33:6-26; 46:27-28; 50:1-5, 17-20; 51:19-24

**Ezekiel** 11:17-21; 14:22-23; 16:53-55, 59-63; 20:33-38, 40-44; 28:25-26; 30:1-5; 34:11-16, 22-31; 35:14-15; 36:8-15, 23-38; Eze. 38-48

**Daniel** 2:33-35, 43-45; 7:7-14, 20-27; 8:9-14, 23-25; 9:27; 11:36-45; 12:1-4, 9-13

**Hosea** 1:10-11; 2:14-23; 3:5; 5:15; 6:1-3; 14:1-9

**Joel** 1:14-20; 2:1-11, 15-32; 3:1-21

**Amos** 5:18-20; 9:11-15

**Obadiah** 1:15-21

**Micah** 1:3-4; 4:1-13; 5:3-15; 7:1-20

**Nahum** 1:13-15

**Habakkuk** 2:14

**Zephaniah** 1:2-18; 3:8-20

**Haggai** 2:6-9, 21-23

**Zechariah** 1:16-21; 2:1-12; 3:8-10; 6:12-13; 8:3-8, 11-15, 18-23; 9:1-17; 10:1-12; 11:15-17; 12:1-13; 13:1-9; 14:1-21

**Malachi** 1:5, 11; 3:1-5, 17-18; 4:1-6

**Matthew** 19:28-30; 24:4-51; 25:1-46; 26:29, 64

**Mark** 13:5-37

**Luke** 1:32-33, 67-75; 3:17; 17:24-37; 19:11-27; 21:7-36; 22:69

**John** 17:24

**Acts** 3:19-21

**Romans** 11:25-27; 14:10-12

**1 Corinthians** 1:7; 3:13-15; 4:5; 6:2-3; 15:20-58

**2 Corinthians** 5:1-10

**Ephesians** 2:19-22

**Philippians** 3:20-21

**Colossians** 3:1-4

**1 Thessalonians** 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-3

**2 Thessalonians** 1:7-10; 2:7-12

**1 Timothy** 6:14

**2 Timothy** 3:1-13; 4:1, 3-4, 8

**Hebrews** 1:11-12; 10:13; 11:16

**1 Peter** 1:3-5, 11

**2 Peter** 2:17; 3:3-13

**1 John** 2:18; 3:2

**Jude** 13-15, 24-25

**Revelation** 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 10-11, 21; chapters 4-22

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE INTRODUCTION TO UNDERSTANDING BIBLE PROPHECY**

1. What is the main theme of Bible prophecy?
2. In what passage did Jesus say that the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms spoke of Him?
3. What verse says “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”?
4. What are the two types of prophecy in the Bible?
5. What verse says that prophesying is speaking to men to edification, exhortation, and comfort?
6. What are two ways that Bible prophecy is different from prophecies in the world?
7. Cyrus was named by what prophet before his birth?
8. The prophecy of Cyrus was given in Scripture how many years before he was born?
9. What prophecy gives the name of Jesus’ birthplace?
10. What Psalm gives the details of Christ’s crucifixion, including the words He spoke on the cross?
11. Nostradamus’ prophecies are described as \_\_\_\_\_.
12. What are two reasons why there are difficulties in Bible prophecy?
13. What are three reasons why believers should study prophecy?
14. Approximately how much of the Bible is prophecy?
15. What are three things that Bible prophecy can produce in the Christian life?
16. In what book and chapter did Jesus rebuke the disciples for not believing the prophecies?
17. In what book does Jehovah God use prophecy as an evidence of the Bible’s divine inspiration?
18. How is fulfilled prophecy an evidence that the Bible is true?

# The Interpretation of Prophecy

*MEMORY VERSES:* Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 45:21; Acts 15:14-15; Romans 11:25-27; 1 Corinthians 10:32; Ephesians 3:4-6

In this section, we deal with the most important rules for interpreting Bible prophecy.

1. Interpret Bible prophecy with a spiritual mind.
2. Interpret Bible prophecy by understanding the words.
3. Interpret Bible prophecy by the literal method.
4. Interpret Bible prophecy by its context.
5. Interpret Bible prophecy by comparing Scripture with Scripture.
6. Interpret Bible prophecy by knowing Old Testament history.
7. Interpret Bible prophecy by knowing the major prophetic events.
8. Interpret Bible prophecy by understanding Old Testament parallelism.
9. Interpret Bible prophecy by understanding the perspective of prophecy.
10. Interpret Bible prophecy by distinguishing Israel from the church.
11. Interpret Bible prophecy by Dispensationalism.
12. Interpret Bible prophecy by distinguishing interpretation from application.
13. Interpret Bible prophecy by using the right tools.
14. Interpret Bible prophecy by devoting time to it.
15. Interpret Bible prophecy by patience and persistence.



## **A Spiritual Mind**

The first and foremost requirement for effective Bible study is to be born again and to walk according to the leading of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14 - 3:3). There are three types of people described in 1 Corinthians chapters two and three: the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man.

*The natural man* (1 Co. 2:14) is the unsaved person who is spiritually dead and blind (Eph. 2:1-3; 2 Co. 4:4). He cannot understand the things of God. "The deepest biblical scholar, if he fails to find Christ, knows less of the real meaning of the gospel than the humblest Christian who is living in the faith of the Son of God" (*Pulpit Commentary*). When the heart turns to the Lord, though, and receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, the blindness is lifted (2 Co. 3:14-17). When I was growing up in a Baptist church, I had a Bible and I studied the Bible in Sunday School and knew it well enough to win Sword Drills and memory verse contests, but the Bible didn't become a living Book for me until I was converted at age 23.

*The spiritual man* (1 Co. 2:15-16) and *the carnal man* (1 Co. 3:1-4) refer to believers.

The believer is either spiritual or carnal depending on his walk with Christ, depending on whether he is walking in the flesh or the Spirit (Ga. 5:16-25). The carnal or worldly believer, because he is not walking in the Spirit, cannot understand the deeper things of Scripture. He can understand milk but not meat. See Hebrews 5:12-14.

In Bible study, spiritual life is more important than technical skill, though skill is important. R.A. Torrey said, "A person who understands the language of the Holy Spirit, but who

does not understand a word of Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic, will get more out of the Bible than one who knows all about Greek and Hebrew but is not born again. It is a well-demonstrated fact that many plain men and women who possess no knowledge of the original languages in which the Bible was written have knowledge of the real contents of the Bible. Their understanding of its actual teaching and its depth, fullness, and beauty far surpasses that of many learned professors in theological faculties.”

Christ gave two promises about knowing the truth. The man who led me to Christ taught me these verses, and I have loved them since the time I was saved. I held to these promises when I was seeking to know what church to join as a new Christian. I have held to these verses as I have sought to know the right doctrine through all the years. In **John 8:31-32**, Christ said that I must continue in His Word to know the truth. To continue means to continue to read it and study it and hear it. And in **John 7:17**, Christ said that I must do God’s will in order to know the truth, meaning that I must obey God’s Word. It is not enough to read the Bible and memorize the Bible. I must obey it. Many people read the Bible, even memorize large parts of it, but they do not obey it and as a result they do not grow and they often go astray into sin and error.

## **Understand the Words**

The most basic thing necessary for understanding the Bible is to know the definition of its individual words. This is not a principle of interpretation, but it is an essential part of Bible study.

For example, if we look at the first chapter of Isaiah, it is impossible to understand this passage unless we understand the following words:

Judah (v. 1)  
Jerusalem (v. 1)  
LORD (v. 2)  
heavens (v. 2)  
crib (v. 3)  
holy (v. 4)  
Zion (v. 8)  
Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 9)  
sacrifices (v. 11)  
courts (v. 12)  
sabbaths (v. 13)  
land (v. 19)  
faithful city (v. 21)  
oaks (v. 29)  
gardens (v. 29)

The effectual Bible student will have a good Bible dictionary at hand (either in print or as part of a computer Bible software package) so that he can look up every word that he doesn't understand. This is one of the ways that I gained a good foundation in Bible knowledge as a young Christian. I wore out a *Strong's Concordance* in the first year I was saved. We also recommend the *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible & Christianity*. It is the only serious Bible dictionary that I know of that includes all of the Bible's words and that interprets Bible prophecy from a literal perspective. Many preachers have written to us through the years to say that this is their most useful Bible study book. One preacher said that if he was shipwrecked on an island and could only have three books, he would want the Bible, *Strong's Concordance*, and the *Way of Life Encyclopedia*. A preacher in South Africa said that if his house was burning and he could save two books other

than the Bible, it would be *Strong's* and the *Way of Life Encyclopedia*.

Following are some of the words that are repeated in prophecy that the student must understand:

**Branch.** A name used by the O.T. prophets to refer to Christ (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zec. 3:8; 6:12-13; Mt. 1:1; Isa. 9:6-7; Re. 22:16). It identifies Christ as the seed of David and refers to Him as the heir to David's throne. This refers to the Davidic Covenant, which we will study in the next section.

**Burden.** In prophecy, a burden is a solemn pronouncement of judgment (Isa. 13:1). "A 'burden,' is the Hebrew word *massa*, referring to a heavy, weighty thing, a thing of great solemnity. It is used to describe a heavy load (Ex. 23:5; 2 Ki. 5:17) and a heavy responsibility (Nu. 11:11). It is a message of judgment. It is 'heavy' because the wrath of God is in it, and grievous for the prophet to declare" (Scofield).

**Consumption.** This refers to destruction; judgment (Isa. 10:22, 23; 28:22). The "consumption decreed" of Isaiah chapter 10 and 28 is the punishment God had promised to rebellious Israel (Le. 26:16; De. 28:22). It points to the Great Tribulation. The Hebrew word translated "consumption" in Isa. 28:22 is translated "riddance" in Zep. 1:18 and "consume" in Eze. 13:13.

**Covenant.** See the section on "The Covenants of God."

**David.** In prophecy, "David" usually refers to God's covenant with David and to Christ as the son of David (Isa. 9:6-7; 55:3). See the section of this course on "The Covenants of God."

**Day.** The term "day" is used in many different ways in the Bible, but one of the ways it is used is to refer to a period of time during which God performs a certain work. Examples

are “the day of the Lord” (Isa. 2:12), “the last day” (Isa. 2:2), and “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Co. 1:8; Ph. 1:10; 2:16; 2 Th. 2:2). We will look at “the last day” separately.

**Day of the Lord.** The period of time in which God will judge the world and establish His kingdom on earth. It is called “the Lord’s day” in contrast to man’s day, which has lasted 6,000 years. In the day of the Lord, God will be exalted and rebellious men will be humbled (Isa. 2:11-17) and the throne of the world will belong to Christ. In the day of the Lord, the present idolatrous world system will be judged and overthrown (Isa. 2:18-21) in preparation for the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. The day of the Lord sometimes refers to one aspect of this work, particularly to the Great Tribulation (Isa. 2:10-21). In other places, it refers to the entire period, including the Tribulation, the Second Coming, the Millennial Reign, and the Eternal state following the White Throne judgment. In some passages, “the day of the Lord” refers to historic judgments upon Israel that point to the final time of judgment. See Zephaniah 1:4-18.

**Ephraim.** The younger of Joseph’s two sons (Ge. 41:50-52). Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph’s sons, both became heirs to Abraham’s promises and blessings. Ephraim received the chief blessing when Jacob blessed the boys before his death (Ge. 48:1-22). Both sons are listed among the 12 tribes of Israel (Nu. 1:32-34; Jos. 17:14, 17; 1 Ch. 7:20). Thus, there were actually 13 tribes, but Levi, the priestly tribe, was not counted in with the 12 (Jos. 14:4). Ephraim occupied the land that later was called Samaria after the captivity by Assyria (1 Ki. 17:24). After the northern tribes broke with Judah, King Jeroboam, an Ephrathite (1 Ki. 11:26), established his capital in Shechem in Ephraim (1 Ki. 12:25). Bethel, where Jeroboam set up the idol and established the system of false religion, was also in Ephraim (1 Ki. 12:26-32; Jud. 4:5). Thus, Ephraim was at the heart of the idolatrous rebellion. That is why God often refers to the northern

kingdom as Ephraim (Isa. 7:2, 5, 8, 9, 17; 11:13; Eze. 37:16-19; Ho. 4:17; 5:3-15). In the list of the tribes that are sealed in Re. 7:5-8, Ephraim is replaced by Joseph. Dan is omitted entirely, and it has been speculated that this is because of Dan's idolatry. In the Millennium, Ephraim is again listed as one of the 12 tribes (Eze. 48:5). Some of the more important Bible verses dealing with the tribe of Ephraim are as follows: Nu. 1:10-33; 2:18-24; 26:28-37; De. 33:17; Jos. 14:4; 16:4-9; 17:8-17; 21:5-21; Ju. 1:29; 7:24; 8:1-2; 12:1-5; 17:1-8; 19:1-18; Eze. 48:5-6.

**Horn.** The "horn" in prophecy is often a symbolic reference to strength, power, and authority (1 Sa. 2:1; Job 16:15; Ps. 75:4-5; Jer. 48:25; Zec. 1:21). It can refer to a king (Re. 17:12). The "little horn" in Daniel refers to the Antichrist (Da. 7:8; 8:9-14).

**Indignation.** Anger; contempt; disgust; abhorrence; the anger of a superior (Ne. 4:1; Es. 5:9; Da. 11:30; Mt. 20:24; 26:8; Lu. 13:14; Ac. 5:17). The Hebrew word *zaam*, which is translated "indignation" 20 times, is also translated "anger" (Ps. 38:3), and "rage" (Ho. 7:16). "Indignation" most frequently refers to God's wrath against sin (De. 29:28; Ps. 69:24; 78:49; 102:10; Isa. 10:5, 25; 13:5; 26:20; 30:27, 30; 34:2; 66:14; Je. 10:10; 50:25; Eze. 21:31; 22:24, 31; Na. 1:6; Hab. 3:12; Mi. 7:9; Zep. 3:8; He. 10:27; Re. 14:10). In the O.T. prophets the word "indignation" especially refers to God's wrath which will be poured out during the Great Tribulation. "Indignation" also refers to the blasphemies of the Antichrist (Da. 8:19; 11:36).

**Isle.** In the Old Testament, the word "island" has a wider meaning than the modern word. The root meaning is habitable land, and it has the following meanings: (1) Dry land, as opposed to water (Is. 42:15). (2) An island surrounded by water (Is. 23:6; Je. 2:10; Ac. 27:16; 28:7; Re. 1:9). (3) A coastland (Is. 20:6; Ge. 10:5). (4) The farthest regions of the earth (Is. 41:5; Zep. 2:11). Isle refers to nations

that were established by the children of Noah (Ge. 10:5), the nations of the earth which shall worship Christ in His kingdom (Psa. 97:1), and the nations of the world that are called to salvation in Christ (Is. 49:1-12).

**Last Days.** The “last days,” which is the same as “the latter days,” describes that period of time during which God will complete His plan for mankind. The last days began with the first coming of Christ (Heb. 1:2; 1 Pe. 1:20). It encompasses the church age (1 Jo. 2:18). It encompasses the Great Tribulation (Jer. 30:23-24), the regathering and regeneration of the nation Israel (Hos. 3:5), the second coming and glorious earthly reign of Christ (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1). And the last days extends to the final judgment of the unsaved (Joh. 12:48). In 1 Ti. 4:1 and 2 Ti. 3:1 “last days” and “latter times” refers to the last days of the church age, to the time just preceding the return of Christ.

**Messiah.** Messiah is the promised Saviour and King of Old Testament prophecy. “Messiah” (*Mashiach*) is the Hebrew word for “Anointed One”; “Christ” is the Greek equivalent (Joh. 1:41). Messiah refers to Jesus as anointed by the Spirit of God, the One chosen by God to be Lord and Saviour (Ps. 2:2; Isa. 11:1-5; 42:1-7; 61:1-3; Da. 9:26; Mt. 16:16; Joh. 4:25-26). In the Old Testament, three offices received an anointing (symbolic of the calling and gifts of the Holy Spirit)--prophets (Isa. 6:1), priests (Ex. 30:30), and kings (1 Sa. 10:1; 16:13; 1 Ki. 1:39). Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all three of these offices.

**Mountain.** Sometimes in Bible prophecy, mountains and hills refer to Gentile nations and governments. In Je. 51:25, Babylon is called a mountain. In the Messianic kingdom, the Lord’s house will be the highest mountain (Isa. 2:2-3).

**Mystery.** The term “mystery” in common usage refers to something secret; something difficult to understand; something mystical and out of the ordinary. While the Bible

does use the term this way in certain instances (Eph. 5:32; 2 Th. 2:7; 1 Ti. 3:16; Re. 17:5), most references to “mystery” in the New Testament refer to truths which God hid from men in Old Testament times, but which He has revealed in the New Testament. It refers to New Testament revelation. It particularly refers to church truth regarding Gentiles and Jews being brought into a spiritual body through Christ (Eph. 3:3-6). Other mysteries include the mystery of the Rapture (1 Co. 15:51-52) and the mystery of Israel’s temporary blindness until the completion of the church (Ro. 11:25).

**Remnant.** “Remnant” often refers to God’s preservation of a portion of Israel through the centuries of judgment. He has promised through His covenants with Abraham and David that a remnant will be preserved to inherit the Messianic kingdom (Isa. 1:9; 10:20-23; 11:11). In the Tribulation one-third of Israel will be saved (Zec. 13:8-9).

**Rock.** In the Old Testament, God is called “the Rock” at least 30 times (De. 32:4; Ps. 18:2). God as “rock” means the following: He is our defense and protection (Ps. 18:2; 71:3); He is high and exalted like a mountain (Ps. 61:2); He is perfectly righteous, dependable, sure (Ps. 92:15). God is not like shifting sand or slippery mud; He is a rock. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is called “the Rock” (1 Co. 10:4). In prophecy, Jesus Christ is that Stone that will descend from Heaven and destroy the wicked kingdoms of this world (Da. 2:34-35, 44-45).

**Root of Jesse.** The prophet Isaiah foretold that Jesus, the son of David, would be both the root and branch of Jesse (Isa. 11:1, 10). This refers to Jesus’ humanity (branch or descendant of Jesse) and His deity (root or progenitor of Jesse). Jesse was the father of David (Ru. 4:18-22; 1 Sa. 17:12-14).



**Times.** The word “times” means different things in the Bible. One of its meanings is a period of time during which God is working out His purposes. In Acts 1:7 we find the phrase “the times,” referring to God’s plan. These are also called “the seasons.” It refers to the time on God’s great prophetic calendar. The Bible speaks of the “times of the Gentiles” (Lu. 21:24), the “times of the restitution of all things” (Ac. 3:21), “this present time” (Ro. 11:5), and “the fulness of times” (Eph. 1:10).

**Vision.** The term “vision” is used in the following ways in Scripture: (1) Prophecy and revelation in general (Ge. 15:1; 1 Sa. 3:1; 2 Ch. 32:32; Pr. 29:18). (2) A vision of the future (2 Sa. 7:17). (3) A dream (Job. 33:15). (4) False prophecies (Isa. 28:7; Jer. 14:14; 23:16; Eze. 13:7; Zec. 13:4).

**Zion.** A name for one of the hills of Jerusalem. It was a Jebusite fortress that was captured by King David (2 Sa. 5:6-7). Often the word *Zion* refers to the entire city of Jerusalem (Ps. 48:2; Isa. 2:3). “Zion” also refers to the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). The Old Testament prophecies of blessing upon Zion refer to earthly Jerusalem (Isa. 51:3; 52:1). Heavenly Jerusalem always has been blessed and needs no restoration!

## **The Normal-Literal Method**

The “normal-literal” method of Bible interpretation refers to the manner in which human language is ordinarily interpreted.

We use figures of speech, such as metaphors, in normal speech, but we understand that these are figures of speech by the context and we know how to interpret them. If I say, “I’m going for a run,” we know that this means that I am literally going to go running. But if I say, “I’m going to run down to the store,” we know this is a figure of speech, and it simply

means that I am going to the store, whether by walking, driving, etc.

The same is true for Bible prophecy. It contains figures of speech, but the Bible makes it clear that these are figures of speech and teaches us how to interpret them either by the context itself or by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Dr. David L. Cooper wisely observes: “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.”

### **Contrast the allegorical method of interpretation**

The allegorical method interprets the prophetic portions of Scripture in a symbolic manner rather than a literal one. By this method, the Old Testament prophecies of Israel’s glorious earthly kingdom are interpreted as descriptions of the church age. So “Sion” is the church and “the thousand years” of Revelation 20 are the church age and the desert blossoming as the rose (Isa. 35:1) is fruitfulness in the church age.

Consider three examples:

The Geneva Bible note at Revelation 9:11 identifies “the Angel of the bottomless pit” as “Antichrist the Pope, king of hypocrites and Satan’s ambassador.” There is no reason, though, to see this angel as anything other than a literal fallen angel in a literal bottomless pit.

Adam Clarke on Revelation 20:2: “In what this binding of Satan consists, who can tell? ... it is not likely that the number, a thousand years, is to be taken literally here.”

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown on Revelation 20:2: “Thousand symbolizes that the world is perfectly leavened and pervaded by the divine; since thousand is ten, the number of the world, raised to the third power, three being the number of God.”

### ***The history of allegoricalism***

First century believers did not interpret the prophecies allegorically. The allegorical interpretation was invented by false teachers after the time of the apostles.

A school was established at **Alexandria, Egypt**, which became the headquarters for the allegorical method of interpretation. Egypt was a place where false teaching proliferated in the early centuries after Christ.

**Clement** headed the school from 190 to 202. He corrupted the Christian faith by mixing it with the worldly philosophy of Plato. He taught many false doctrines, including purgatory, and believed that most men would eventually be saved even though Jesus said only a few would be (Mt. 7:14).

**Origen** (A.D. 185-254) was one of the chief fathers of allegoricalism. He said, “The Scriptures have little use to those who understand them literally.” He described the literal meaning of Scripture as “bread” and encouraged the student to go beyond this to the “wine” of allegoricalism, whereby one can become intoxicated and transported to heavenly realms. Origen’s commentaries contained a mass of fanciful interpretations, abounding in “heretical revisals of Scripture” (Frederick Nolan, *Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate*, p. 367). Origen led the school at Alexandria from 202 to 232. Though he endured persecution and torture for the cause of Christ under the emperor Decius in 250, Origen held many false teachings. Like Clement, he mixed the truth of the Bible with pagan philosophy. Following are

some of his heresies: He taught baptismal regeneration, purgatory, the pre-existence of the human soul, and universalism (with even the devil eventually being saved). He taught that the Holy Spirit was the first creature made by God and denied that Jesus is fully God. He did not believe that the Scriptures are wholly inspired by God. He taught that celibacy is a holy state above marriage.

The Roman Catholic Church interpreted Bible prophecy allegorically throughout its history.

The Protestant denominations (e.g., Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist) have also interpreted prophecy allegorically, with few exceptions. This is one of the errors they brought out of Rome.

### **Why we interpret the prophecies literally**

***First, God gave the Scriptures to REVEAL truth to man, not to hide it.*** See Deuteronomy 29:29. Prophecy is given to reveal secrets, not hide them. Prophecy is light, not darkness (2 Pe.1:19). The Bible's final book of prophecy, *Revelation*, is so named because it is given to reveal truth, not hide it. Prophecy is to be understood in the normal way that human language is understood because it is God's revelation to mankind in human language. God made human language, and He has communicated His revelation to man in normal human language that is interpreted in a normal way that language is interpreted.

### ***Second, the apostles interpreted prophecy literally.***

Consider two key passages:

Acts 3:18-21 - Peter preached that as there was a literal fulfillment of Christ's first coming to suffer for man's sin, so

there will be a literal fulfillment of the prophecies pertaining to Israel's conversion and kingdom. The heaven will receive Christ until He returns. Then there will be a "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets." Words could not be plainer. The prophecies of Israel's regathering and conversion and blessing and the prophecies of Christ sitting on David's throne will be literally fulfilled.

Romans 11:25-27 - Paul also taught that God's covenants with Israel will be literally fulfilled. Israel is currently blind, except for those few, like Peter and Paul, who are saved. Israel will be blind *only until* the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, referring to the church age. Then Israel will be saved and her covenants fulfilled. Again, words could not be plainer.

That the apostles and the apostolic churches interpreted prophecy literally is admitted by most church historians.

"The early Church for 300 years looked for the imminent return of our Lord to reign, and they were right" (William Newell, *Revelation*).

Even Augustine, "the father of amillennialism," admitted that there were many in his day [fifth century] who believed in a literal fulfillment of Revelation 20. He said, "I myself, too, once held this opinion. ... They who do believe them are called by the spiritual, Chiliasts, which we may literally reproduce by the name Millenarians" (Augustine, *City of God*, book 20, chapter 7).

The church at Antioch continued to interpret prophecy literally after the allegorical method was invented by heretics such as Origen (185-254). Antioch, of course, was an important church founded by Barnabas and Paul, and it is from this church that the first foreign missionaries were sent

out (Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-4; 15:39-41). It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. Some of the preachers associated with Antioch were Lucian (died 312), Diodorus of Tarsus (d. 390), Chrysostom (d. 407), Theodore (d. 428), and Theodoret (d. 458). These men did not accept the Alexandrian allegorical method of interpretation. They interpreted Bible prophecy literally. Farrar says, "Diodorus of Tarsus' books were devoted to an exposition of Scripture in its literal sense, and he wrote a treatise, now unhappily lost, 'on the difference between allegory and spiritual insight'" (F. W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, pp. 213-15).

***Third, Bible prophecies have always been fulfilled literally.***

*Prophecies about Israel were fulfilled literally.*

Israel's entire history was given in the great prophecy of Deuteronomy 28 (see particularly verses 63-67). This prophecy describes Israel's defeat at the hands of foreign powers and her dispersion to the ends of the earth, and they have been fulfilled literally and precisely over the past 2,000 years, beginning with the Babylonian Captivity and then Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and again in AD 135.

*Prophecies of the nations were fulfilled literally.*

The prophecies of the nations by Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were so precise that scoffers have said that they must have been written after the events.

**TYRE**

Consider the prophecy of the ancient city of Tyre in Ezekiel 26:3-16. Tyre was the capital of the great Phoenician Empire. The city consisted of two parts. One part of the city was on the coast and another part was on an island about a half mile

# Daniel 2 The Times of the Gentiles

## Daniel 2:31-45

### Introductory lessons

This prophecy is an overview of the times of the Gentiles, from Babylon to the Antichrist. It describes four great kingdoms that are associated with Israel.

This is one of the most important and amazing prophecies in Scripture. It is impossible to understand human history properly apart from this prophecy.

### Five world kingdoms (Da. 2:31-45)

The prophecy describes five world kingdoms.

1. The head of gold signifies **Babylon** of Daniel's day (Da. 2:37-38).

Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, signifying that the Babylonian Empire was at its greatest and most glorious in his day. It weakened quickly under Nebuchadnezzar's successors. "His son Evil-Merodach reigned two years only. Neriglissar reigned four years (560-556) and Labashi-Marduk only one (556). Nabonidus engineered a coup d'état in 555 and ruled till Babylon fell to the Persians in 539" (*Expositors Bible Commentary*).

2. The breast and arms of silver signify the **Medo-Persian Empire** (Da. 2:39).