

Can We Trust Bible Prophecy? 2nd Coming of Christ Session One

I have always been very hungry for spiritual truth. In my late teens, I began a search that would eventually take me around the world to over thirty countries. This search became a passion after a near-death experience. I found myself on death's doorstep due to some teenage stupidity. Hovering at the point of departure, I called out to God to spare my life. At that point in my life, I didn't really know or believe in God, but He had mercy on me and delivered me from death, regardless of my indifference to Him. Intrigued by my near death experience, (I was aware of my spirit leaving my body), I became very interested in issues such as life after death, what happens when one dies, and the whole point of our existence. I wondered, what did the future hold for the world in which I was living? While on this search for God, I came across what many believe to be the prophetic gifting of Edgar Cayce, Jeanne Dixon and Nostradamus and several others. I did not know it, but I was looking in all the wrong places. God saw my searching heart.

Again and again, these so-called prophecies were so way off, that they proved to be ridiculous. For instance, Edgar Cayce predicted that a secret underground chamber would be found in 1998 between the paws of the Sphinx in Egypt, and documents would be found there detailing the history of the mythical city of Atlantis. Another "prophetess" and astrologer, Jean Dixon, was reputed to have predicted the assassination of John F. Kennedy, but when one searches more diligently, the facts reveal a different story. In the May 1956 issue of Parade Magazine, she wrote that the presidential election in 1960, "would be dominated by labor and won by a Democrat," who would then go on to "be assassinated or die in office though not necessarily in his first term." She later admitted, "During the 1960 election, I saw Richard Nixon as the winner," and at the time made clear predictions that JFK would fail to win the election. In the 1956 prophecy, she merely stated that a president would be "assassinated or die in office." By emphasizing a few coincidentally correct predictions and ignoring those that were wrong, she acquired fame and notoriety.¹ What about the so-called prophet Nostradamus? Widely held to be the world's best prophet, he also got it wrong in so many places. His writings are so obscure that anyone can read into them whatever they like. Writer Dennis McCallum brings us just one of his predictions:

The senseless ire of the furious combat will cause steel to be flashed at the table by brothers: To part them death, wound, and curiously, the proud duel will come to France.

Surprisingly, this "prophecy," we are told, predicts the Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt and the assassination of Anwar Sadat! The "table" refers to the bargaining table. The "proud duel" refers to international terrorism. The "harm" to France refers to the destabilization in the Near East since the death of Sadat.² After some time in studying these so-called prophets, I finally came across the prophecies in the Bible. I was shocked to find out that a quarter of the Bible is prophecy! As I began to delve deep into biblical prophecies, I was astounded to find the depth and detail of specific predictions to be so accurate that it convinced me that what I was

¹ Taken from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeanne_Dixon

² Dennis McCallum, Christianity, The Faith That Makes Sense, Tyndale House Publishers, Page 61.

reading was a book that God had breathed on and protected down through the ages. I became convinced that God was shedding light on my pathway, leading me to the truth. Today many are willing, as I once was, to consider the predictions and prophecies of false prophets. Sadly, the Bible is often rejected and seen as irrelevant for today. If people understood how much of the Bible is prophecy, how intricately it fits together, and how much has already been fulfilled accurately, their conclusions would be different, I am sure of it!

In the year 1977, I came to the place in my life where I wholeheartedly placed my trust in Christ. I believe the Bible to be a revelation of God to humanity about a Savior who has come and who will come again. I assume that most of you reading this have come to that same place where you believe that the Bible is God's Word. For those of you still searching for the truth, I hope that as we explore what the Bible has to say about the future, you too will conclude that the Bible provides answers and meaning for the world in which we live.

Question: Do you believe that God speaks to people today, and if so, what ways does He choose to communicate with us? Have you ever sensed that God was leading you in a specific direction or decision?

Does God Know Everything Ahead of Time?

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come (Isaiah 46:10).

To understand this topic of prophecy we have to explore the truth that God is omniscient. Omniscience is a fancy word to describe the fact that God knows everything. He is not bound by time in the same way that we are. He knows everything that is happening, past, present, and future. There is nothing that God is in the dark about; there are no surprises to Him. This means that He has perfect knowledge of all things that has happened, is happening right now, and all that will happen in His universe. Not only does He possess complete knowledge of all the facts, but He also has a perfect understanding and interpretation of all things that happen or will happen. There is nothing that God does not know about you and the world in which we live. He knows everything you have ever done, doing now, and everything you are going to do:

1O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. 2You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. 5You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. 6Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain (Psalm 139:1-5).

The Test of Prophecy to False Gods

When the people of Israel were wandering far from God and worshipping nature deities (demons) in the form of idols, He used a prophet, Isaiah, to speak to them as to who was the true God. To set Himself apart from other so-called deities, God said: **"I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken**

place, and new things I declare; **before they spring into being I announce them to you**” (Isaiah 42:8-9). To prove and authenticate that He alone is God, the Lord says that He knows the future and tells us ahead of time. He says, “Before they spring into being I announce them to you.” He challenged the false gods and idols to do the same. Here, Isaiah is speaking on behalf of God, addressing the people’s belief in false idols. He issues a challenge to these false gods:

²¹“Present your case,” says the LORD. “Set forth your arguments,” says Jacob’s King.
²²**“Tell us, you idols, what is going to happen.** Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or **declare to us the things to come,** ²³**tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods.** Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear (Isaiah 41:21-23).

Even though the people in Isaiah’s day were looking to false idols, God patiently continued to communicate with them through His prophet. He reminds them, as we see in the following passages that He has made the truth known and He has told them of things to happen. He also says that He will continue to do this!

⁶“This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. ⁷Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and **lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let them foretell what will come.** ⁸Do not tremble, do not be afraid. **Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago?** You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one” (Isaiah 44:6-8).

⁹Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.^[SEP]¹⁰**I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.** I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please’ (Isaiah 46:9-10).

³**I foretold the former things long ago,** my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. ⁴For I knew how stubborn you were; your neck muscles were iron, your forehead was bronze. ⁵**Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you** so that you could not say, ‘My images brought them about; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.’ ⁶You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them? **“From now on I will tell you of new things,** of hidden things unknown to you.^[SEP]⁷They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today.^[SEP]So you cannot say, ‘Yes, I knew of them’ (Isaiah 48:3-7).

God has purposed to unveil hidden things to humanity. The reason He did this was to convince them that He alone is God, there is no other!

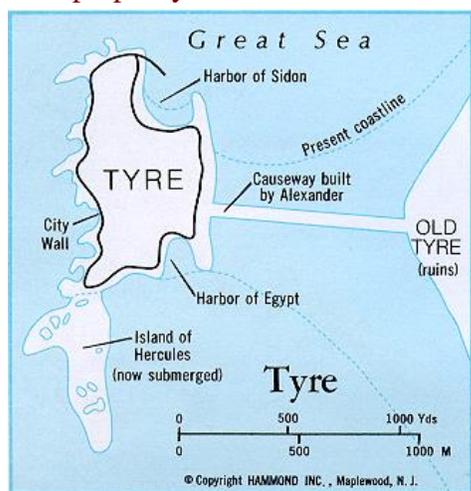
What Evidence is there of His Knowledge?

To prove that He alone is God, He has foretold many things in great detail that we may have evidence to trust His Word. One striking example is the prophecy concerning a city called Tyre. There were specific details in this prophecy which came to pass remarkably. Let's examine how prophecy was fulfilled concerning this ancient city. You will be amazed if you take the time to consider how so many factors contributed to bringing these words to pass. I have chosen to highlight the story of Tyre, as it is an excellent illustration of God speaking words before they come to pass, which have been fulfilled and can be observed through history, up until the present day.

The Prophecy Concerning Tyre (Ezekiel 26).

About 2600 years ago, the prophet Ezekiel wrote down a detailed prophecy that was given to him by the God of Israel. Because the city of Tyre had rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem, God said that he would also demolish the city of Tyre, the ruins of which are now in the present day country of Lebanon. Here is the prophecy:

In the eleventh month of the twelfth year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, ‘Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper,’ ³therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring **many nations against you**, like the sea casting up its waves. ⁴**They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock.** ⁵**Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets**, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD. She will become **plunder for the nations**, ⁶and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD. ⁷“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre **Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon**, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army. ⁸He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp up to your walls and raise his shields against you. ⁹He will direct the blows of his



battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons. ¹⁰His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the warhorses, wagons and chariots **when he enters your gates** as men enter a city whose walls have been broken through. ¹¹The hooves of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground. ¹²They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; **they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea.** ¹³I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music

of your harps will be heard no more. ¹⁴**I will make you a bare rock**, and you **will become a place to spread fishnets**. You will never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have

spoken, declares the Sovereign LORD (Ezekiel 26:1-14).

What specific incidents do you see Ezekiel prophesying would happen to this city? (Keeping in mind that not a single episode had taken place at the time the prophecy was given.)

- 1) Nebuchadnezzar would attack the city and capture it (v.7, 10).
- 2) Many nations would come against the city and plunder it (v.3-5).
- 3) There would be a siege on the city by Nebuchadnezzar (v.8).
- 4) The stones, timber, and rubble of Tyre would be thrown into the sea.
- 5) The city would be a bare rock and a place for fishermen to spread their nets.
- 6) The city would never be rebuilt.

Seventeen years after this prophecy was given, the Babylonian king came against the mainland city. He was after the great treasure that was there—the city of Tyre had become very prosperous. Nebuchadnezzar was after finances to fund his army. When he arrived, the dust of His chariots and men covered the city. He used massive force, and with battering rams, he broke down the walls and captured the city. There was only one problem, though; ships had shifted the majority of the treasure to the two little islands that were half a mile from the land. Nebuchadnezzar and his army were furious, but try as they might; they were unsuccessful in capturing the island fortress, partly because they had no ships. Nebuchadnezzar carried on down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Some would say that this left the prophecy partially unfulfilled, and for several years it was so. Two hundred forty years later Alexander the Great came to Tyre on his conquest of the Persian Empire. He also attacked the city of Tyre and to get to the island off the coast he built a causeway with the rubble left of the mainland city of Tyre. All of the rubble of the city of Tyre was thrown into the sea to make the causeway. Alexander finally captured the city, and even today there are pictures of the local fishermen spreading their nets on the bare rock of where the ancient city once stood. The causeway changed the way the tide ran past the city making the old island city now underwater, just as Ezekiel prophesied.

A Jewish traveler in the 1100s, named Benjamin of Tudela, came to the old spot where Tyre once existed and wrote:

“A man can ascend the walls of New Tyre and see ancient Tyre, which the sea has now covered, lying at a stone’s throw from the new city. And should one care to go forth by boat, one can see the castles, marketplaces, streets, and palaces in the bed of the sea. New Tyre is a busy place of commerce, to which merchants flock from all quarters.”

Benjamin of Tudela, *the Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*.

Prophecies Fulfilled in the First Coming of Christ.

The Old Testament is full of “pictures” of Jesus. These pictures are called “foreshadows.” Explore these scriptures and see how many references to Christ are foreshadowed. Read through the whole passage of Isaiah 53 and meditate on the similarities that you find describing events in the life of Christ.

1. Born of a virgin. Isaiah 7:14; Genesis 3:15. "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son."

2. The tribe of Judah. Genesis 49:10. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah..."
3. House of David. Jeremiah 23:5. "I will raise unto Judah a righteous Branch, and a King."
4. Messiah to be born at Bethlehem. Micah 5:2. "Thou, Bethlehem. Judah, yet out of thee shall come."
5. Visited by wise men with gifts. Isaiah 60:3, 6-9. "Gentiles shall come...and kings".
6. Would be in Egypt for a time. Hosea 11:1. "Called my son out of Egypt." 7. Infants killed at His birthplace. Jeremiah 31:15. "Rachel weeping for her children." 8. Preceded by a messenger (John the Baptist) Isaiah 40:3. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."
9. Ministry to begin in Galilee. Isaiah 9:1. "Zebulun, & Naphtali.. have seen a great light."
10. Perform miracles. Isaiah 35:5,6. "blind,..deaf,..lame,..dumb sing".
11. Teach parables. Psalm 78:2. "I will open my mouth in a parable,.."
12. Heal many. Isaiah 42:7,16; Matthew 8:16,17. "To open the blind eyes.."
13. His miracles not believed. Isaiah 53:1. "Who hath believed our report?"
14. Enter Jerusalem on a donkey. Zechariah 9:9. "thy King cometh...riding upon an ass."
15. Betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah 11:12. 'they weighed for my price 30.'
16. Money then used to buy a potter's field. Zechariah 11:13. "cast them to the potter.."17. Money was thrown on the Temple floor. Zechariah 11:13. "cast them...in the house of the Lord."18. Forsaken by His disciples. Zechariah 13:7. "Smite the Shepherd, & sheep shall be scattered."
19. False witnesses accuse Him. Psalm 35:11. "False witnesses did rise up."
20. Silent before His accusers. Isaiah 53:7. "He was oppressed... yet he opened not his mouth."21. Messiah would be scourged and spat on. Isaiah 50:6. "I hid not my face from shame and spitting."
22. Crucified between two thieves. Isaiah 53:9. "He made his grave with the wicked."
23. Buried in a rich man's tomb. Isaiah 53:9. "His grave ... with the rich in his death."24. His side pierced. Zechariah 12:10. "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced."
25. Given vinegar to drink. Psalm 69:21. "In my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink."
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26. Garments gambled for. Psalm 22:18. "They part my garments among them, cast lots on my."27. No bones were broken. Psalm 34:20. "He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken."
28. His forsaken cry. Psalm 22:1. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
29. Darkness over the land from noon. Amos 8:9. "I will darken the earth in the clear day."
30. Hands and feet pierced. Psalm 22:16. "...they pierced my hands and my feet."31. Raised from the dead. Psalm 16:10. "thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."
32. Ascend to heaven. Psalm 68:18. "Thou hast ascended on high."33. Rejected by His own nation, Israel. Isaiah 53:3 'He is rejected of men. We esteemed him not.'34. Gentiles believe in him. Isaiah 60:3. "Gentiles shall come to thy light."
35. Messiah comes, is killed, then Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed (fulfilled in 70AD). Daniel 9:26. "shall Messiah be cut off,... people...destroy the city and sanctuary."
36. Jews to lose power to pass the death sentence 23 years before the trial of Christ. Genesis 49:10. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come;" This was confirmed by Josephus describing the Romans taking this power away from the Jews in 11AD.

37. Messiah would offer Himself as Prince to Israel 173,880 days after 5th March 444BC. Daniel 9:26-27; Luke 19:41-44. "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to Messiah the Prince shall be 69 weeks (heptads=7x360 days)" ³

As you can see, the Bible points to Christ throughout the Old as well as the New Testament. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He has decided, in His wisdom, to reveal to us visions and pictures of what the future holds. I don't believe God ever gives us unnecessary information. That which He chooses to disclose is for our good, to increase our faith and reassure us that He is aware of all things, and in control of all things. Since He dwells outside of time, He wants us to know that no matter what happens, He holds the future and all of eternity. He is our God, the Rock.

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³ Taken from: <http://answers.libertybaptistchurch.org.au/answers/2.pdf>