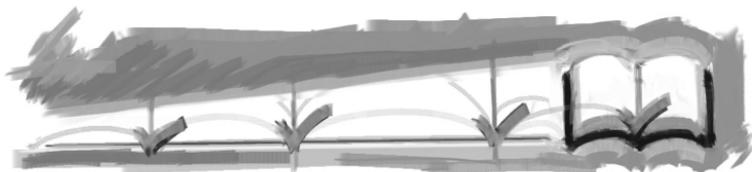


Bible Prophecy Fulfilled



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Isa. 52:13–53:12, Daniel 2, Matt. 24:24, John 13:19.*

Memory Text: “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. 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, NIV*).

Key Thought: Biblical prophecy remains a powerful factor in helping establish our faith.

Every year people seek expert advice on how various stocks will do. Yet, in the end the experts can tell them everything about the stock except the one thing everyone wants to know: what it will do in the future.

God, though, knows the future. He has proved that to us, again and again, by some of the incredible prophecies in the Bible. Many of these prophecies were written well in advance of the predicted events. And, sure enough, time and again the events happened just as the Lord said in the prophecy. We know this because today, looking back over history, we see the prediction in the Bible, and then we can see that the prediction came true. “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (*Amos 3:7, NKJV*).

Having seen that these past predictions were so accurate, we can trust the Lord on the prophecies yet future, such as the greatest future prophecy of all: the second coming of Jesus.

This week we'll take a look at some of the great prophecies in Scripture. What can we learn from them? What is the principle behind prophecy? How does prophecy help us learn to trust in the Bible as the Word of God?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 21.*

Prophetic License

In Hebrew the verb *naba* means “to prophesy.” It carries the idea of someone pouring forth words with fervor or inspiration. The noun *nabi* means a spokesperson, a prophet, a person authorized to speak for another (*see Exod. 6:28-30, 7:1*). Another word used in the Bible for someone with the prophetic gift is *seer*; translated from two different Hebrew words, each with the meaning “to see.” Prophets, it seems, have been given the ability to prophesy regarding things that ordinary people might not see. Thus, not only do prophets see what others might not—they are called by God to speak those things, often with fervor and might, as well.

Read Matthew 24:24. What warning about prophets is Jesus giving to us? What’s implied in those words?

Jesus’ warning about false prophets can be understood to contain the idea that true ones will exist, as well. After all, if we were to reject all prophets—that is, reject the gift altogether—there would be no need of the warning about false ones.

Read Matthew 24:32, 33 and John 13:19. What principle about how prophecy should work is revealed here?

With these verses Jesus showed us that prophecy is not just about being able to tell the future. Instead, prophecy is given to strengthen our faith in God and His Word after the events have occurred. The more we see the fulfillment of the prophecy, the more we believe that the Bible really comes from the Lord.

There are various kinds of prophecies. One kind has to do with the predictions of a coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Others have to do with the future of the Israelites and of various nations; others deal with the end of the world, and even beyond.

Think over the role that prophecy has played in your own walk with the Lord. What lessons about prophecy have you learned over time? What words of advice or caution would you give to a new Christian or to someone studying prophecy for the first time, regarding this wonderful gift?

Early Prophecies

“Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper” (2 Chron. 20:20).

Beginning even in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we can see that prophecy plays an important role in the history of God’s work with fallen humanity.

Look up the following texts. What was prophesied, and how and when were those prophecies fulfilled?

Gen. 3:15

Gen. 6:13

Gen. 12:1-3

Gen. 15:13, 14

Gen. 18:10

It’s easy for us now, looking back, to see just how accurately those prophecies were fulfilled. But place yourself in the position, say, of Noah, who was told that water from the sky was going to wipe out the earth, even though, according to Ellen White, prior to that time it had never even rained! (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 96, 97.) Or of Abraham and Sarah, that she would one day be the mother of their child when she was long past child-bearing age. It was surely a great test of faith on their part (*Heb. 11:8-11*) to trust God concerning the events that He said would come to pass.

What promises of God are you waiting to see fulfilled? What lessons can you learn from past examples of Bible characters who trusted in God’s promises that can help you learn to trust Him, as well?

The Prophecy of Daniel 2

Review the prophecy of Daniel 2. What does it teach us about the power of God to foretell the future?

World history supports the accuracy of this amazing prophecy. Babylon's golden kingdom ruled the world from 605 to 539 B.C. Babylon's influence was greatly extended, and it became the dominant power in the ancient Near East. Today the ruins of the city of Babylon are located in Iraq, 70 miles south of Baghdad. Not only did the Bible predict the fall of Babylon (*Jer. 51:49, 53*), it clearly stated who was to direct the campaign against Babylon (*Isa. 45:1-4*). Cyrus and his army were at the gates of Babylon about one hundred seventy-five years after the prophecy was given.

The Medes and Persians ruled the world from 539 B.C. to 331 B.C. But then God said in Daniel 2:39, " 'Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth' " (*NIV*). Daniel 8:21 clearly explained that Greece was the third kingdom. Within a short time the Greek armies, led by Alexander the Great, conquered the world. Wearing bronze breastplates and helmets, they carried bronze shields and swords. What a fitting symbol for Greece.

The Greek Empire was then conquered by the iron monarchy of Rome in 168 B.C., another dramatic fulfillment of the prophecy. Rome had the longest reign of any other world power. For more than five hundred years Rome was dominant; from the British Isles to the Arabian Gulf, from the North Sea to the Sahara, and from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, Rome held sway.

But as Daniel said, " 'The kingdom shall be divided' " (*Dan. 2:41, NKJV*). Rome was divided into independent kingdoms that later became the nations of modern Europe, nations that would "not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay" (*vs. 43*). We, today, are living in the time of those feet and toes of the statue.

The next kingdom to come is the final one, God's eternal kingdom. Daniel was so right on all the others. How foolish it would be to not trust him on this, the last one.

Think about this amazing prophecy: Daniel, living more than five hundred years before Christ, described Europe even as it exists today! How could he have done this other than by the power of God? Is your faith wavering? Are you sometimes having trouble trusting in the Lord? Go back over this prophecy or others that have been fulfilled, asking the Lord to use them to help build your faith.

The Messiah in Prophecy

Of all the prophecies in the Old Testament, the ones concerning the first coming of Jesus are among the most powerful. There are about sixty Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming Messiah. One of the most powerful is found in Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 52:13–53:12. What characteristics of the Messiah do you see here? How did Jesus fulfill them?

This has to be one of the most powerful examples of predictive prophecy in the Bible. It is full of contingencies that could not be rigged in advance in an attempt to produce fulfillment. This prophecy has been and still continues to be powerful proof for the Christian faith.

Below are a few Old Testament prophecies about Jesus and their New Testament fulfillment. What can we learn from these about the trustworthiness of God’s Word?

Old Testament Prophecy	New Testament Fulfillment
Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
Micah 5:2	Luke 2:4-7
Daniel 9:25	Luke 3:1-23
Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14

It is exciting to study how Jesus also refers to the predictive prophecies about Himself and their fulfillment after His resurrection. He told two disciples on the road to Emmaus, “ ‘Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (*Luke 24:26, 27, NIV*). The things concerning Himself may have included His birth (*Isa. 7:14*), ministry (*Isa. 9:1, 2*), His being rejected (*Isa. 53:3*), His hands and feet pierced (*Ps. 22:16*), His being mocked and insulted (*vss. 6-8*), His crucifixion with sinners (*Isa. 53:12*), and His resurrection (*Ps. 16:10*).

Because of what Jesus did in fulfilling these prophecies, you can stand forgiven before God right now, regardless of your past, simply by claiming His work in your behalf. How should this great truth, that of salvation by faith, change your life? How has it changed it already? What other changes need to come, as well?

The Second Coming

As we have been seeing all week, so many of the prophecies about past events have been fulfilled, just as predicted, and often in an amazing way. But these were all prophecies fulfilled in the past. The Bible, however, talks about prophecies yet to take place. Among the most important of these are, of course, the prophecies about Christ's second coming.

If all the prophecies about His first coming were so accurately fulfilled, what should that tell us regarding the certainty of the ones about the Second Coming?

Before leaving His disciples, Jesus had promised them concerning the certainty of His coming: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (*John 14:3, NIV*). Peter, one of the closest disciples of Jesus, wrote, “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (*2 Pet. 3:13, NIV*).

The Bible not only reveals the manner and the characteristics of the second coming of Christ but also describes the signs of His second coming. Read the following prophecies concerning the signs of His coming, and mark an X by the areas that are seeing fulfillment:

1. Increase of knowledge (*Dan. 12:4*)
2. False messiahs (*Matt. 24:4, 5*)
3. Wars and rumors of wars (*Matt. 24:6, 7a*)
4. Famine (*Matt. 24:7b*)
5. Earthquakes (*Matt. 24:7b*)
6. Preaching of the gospel (*Matt. 24:14*)
7. Pestilence (*Luke 21:11*)
8. Signs and wonders (*Luke 21:11*)
9. People living in fear (*Luke 21:26*)
10. Social problems (*2 Tim. 3:1-5*)
11. Increase of skepticism (*2 Pet. 3:3, 4*)

A pretty accurate description of our world, is it not? Amazing, too, if you consider that the passages were written many long centuries ago. Hence, even more proof that we can trust the Bible.

If you believed that Jesus were coming back tomorrow, would that thought make you happy or fearful? What does your answer tell you about yourself and your relationship to God?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream,” pp. 491–502 in *Prophets and Kings*; “The Bible Prophets Wrote for Our Time,” pp. 338, 339; “Can All Have the Gift of Prophecy?” pp. 340, 341 in *Selected Messages*, book 3.

“It is the voice of Christ that speaks through patriarchs and prophets, from the days of Adam even to the closing scenes of time. The Saviour is revealed in the Old Testament as clearly as in the New. It is the light from the prophetic past that brings out the life of Christ and the teachings of the New Testament with clearness and beauty. The miracles of Christ are a proof of His divinity; but a stronger proof that He is the world’s Redeemer is found in comparing the prophecies of the Old Testament with the history of the New.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 799.

“Every nation that has come upon the stage of action has been permitted to occupy its place on the earth, that the fact might be determined whether it would fulfill the purposes of the Watcher and the Holy One. Prophecy has traced the rise and progress of the world’s great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. With each of these, as with the nations of less power, history has repeated itself. Each has had its period of test; each has failed, its glory faded, its power departed.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 535.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** As a class, talk about the lesson in general this week. What things stood out that perhaps have helped you better understand the role of prophecy and how it works?
- 2** With so much evidence for the validity of the Scriptures revealed in prophecy, why do you think many people—when presented with this evidence—still refuse to believe? What other factors might be involved? What things could you do that could help break down some of these barriers?
- 3** With so many strange teachings on prophecy out there, what can you, as a class, do to help church members, especially new ones, be more solidly grounded in Bible prophecy and the principles behind it?

Breaking Satan's Chains: Part 2

by OLEG FARKHUTDINOV

My mother sat across from me in the prison visiting room and cried as she told me how someone had broken into her home and stolen her pension. As I listened to her tearful account, the spirit of revenge welled up inside me. I wanted to get out of prison and find the people who had hurt my mother. I wanted revenge.

Then I remembered the time my sister had lost an entire summer's wages when thieves stole her bag. I had told her she needed to be more careful with her money. But suddenly I realized the grief I had caused people when I had stolen from them. God was showing me my own faults through my mother's loss. "Dear Mother," I said. "Forgive me; it's my fault."

I began to understand the words of the apostle Paul to the Galatians: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (*Gal. 6:7, NIV*). I asked God's forgiveness and embraced His commandments in my life, especially the commandment that says, "You shall not steal" (*Exod. 20:15, NIV*).

From that day forward, God prepared me for release from prison. The Lord and I fought against the habits and vices that had chained me in a prison far darker than the ones with bars. He healed my body and my spirit and turned my heart and mind around. I once had thought that honesty and morality did not exist, that there was no such thing as an honest person; therefore it was not immoral to steal, especially from the government. But God made me realize that stealing anything—goods, ideas, or time—is a sin in His eyes.

By the time I was released from prison, I was a changed man. Fear was gone, and in its place was a desire to make right all the wrongs I had committed over the years, to apologize to those whom I had wounded and to reimburse their losses.

God took me back to my family, and the changes He had wrought in my heart touched my wife's heart as well. Our roles had changed. It was I who wept and prayed for her, just as she had begged me to change years before. God answered my prayers, and my wife gave her life to Jesus. Now together we pray and work for others.

The Lord took a crooked, empty heart and filled it with His love while I was in prison. Now I find no greater joy than to help other prisoners find peace and forgiveness and freedom in Christ. Thank you for supporting ministry to prisoners through your mission offerings.

OLEG FARKHUTDINOV works in prison ministries in the Southern Union Conference of the Euro-Asia Division.