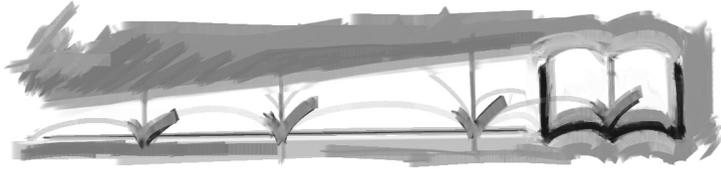


Bible Prophecy Fulfilled



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?

I Have to Teach Tomorrow . . .

► **Key Text:** *1 Peter 1:12*

► **Teach the Class to:**

Know: That prophets are called by God to prophesy of things that others do not know and understand.

Feel: That our faith is strengthened by the fulfillment of prophecy.

Do: Seek to understand the prophecies concerning the second coming of Jesus.

► **Lesson Outline:**

I. Trusting in the Prophecies (*John 13:19*)

A Prophecies were given to strengthen our faith. Name some of the prophecies that are found in the Bible. Discuss how they strengthen faith.

B Jesus warned that false prophets would arise. How can a false prophet be identified?

II. The Fulfillment of Prophecy (*Isa. 7:14, Matt. 1:21*)

A Explain how the prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled with such accuracy.

B Name the specific details of the Messianic prophecies found in Isaiah that point directly to Jesus. (*See Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7.*)

III. Future Events (*Matt. 24:3*)

A Why was it so important for Jesus to give His disciples signs of His second coming?

B Discuss our place in the prophetic sequence of events to take place before the Second Coming.

► **Summary:** The fulfillment of prophecy is the surest evidence of its authenticity.

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1—Motivate!**

Just for Teachers: Step 1 of the Natural Learning Cycle links the learners' experiences to the lesson. Help your class members answer the question, *Why is this lesson important to me?*

C O N T I N U E D 

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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED**Definition:**

trust n. 1. “Firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing.”

The weather forecasters are unanimous: It is going to be a gorgeous day.

That is why you do not have any second thoughts as you prepare for a day outside.

So how surprised you are when you look up from your comfy spot only to see storm clouds gathering.

Most human predictions of the future, even those based on the best scientific information, are not very accurate. There is only One who knows the future well enough to tell us what will really happen. The prophecies that come from God are recorded in the Bible—and we can trust them.

► **STEP 2—Explore!**

Just for Teachers: This step of the Natural Learning Cycle presents information learners can use to help them better understand the lesson. Help your class members answer this question, **What do I need to know from God’s Word?**

Bible Commentary**I. Early Prophecies** (*Gen. 3:15*)

Of all the early prophecies, this is perhaps the most difficult. Here are some points to consider in interpretation:

- On the surface, this text has been understood to describe the origin of the natural fear that human beings have for snakes.
- God’s curse on the serpent—that he would henceforth transport himself in the dust—is the ultimate degradation of the serpent. To say specifically that he would eat dust might reflect that it was in the area of appetite that the serpent deceived the woman. In other words, one bad “eating” is punished with another.
- Given the snake’s posture, and the woman’s, the head of one and the heel of the other are the natural points of contact. While the snake can injure

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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.

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

the woman by biting her heel, a heel on the snake's head is fatal.

- A second-level interpretation is to see this as a Messianic prophecy: The seed of the woman is Jesus the Messiah, and the serpent is Satan, with conflict anticipated between them.

So this text may prefigure Satan's role in Jesus' torture and death (the biting of the heel), and Jesus' ultimate victory (crushing the serpent's head).

II. The Prophecy of Daniel 2

Consider This: A discussion of the feet and toes of mixed iron and clay as a picture of modern Europe might lead to a lively discussion among modern Adventist readers: In light of advances in creating a united European Union (already achieved in the area of currency), how do we understand the prophecy's implication that Europe always will remain divided?

III. The Messiah in Prophecy

(Review passages in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 that speak of servanthood.)

The word to highlight in explaining this passage to your class is *servant*.

Most Jewish interpreters of the Messianic prophecies anticipated a messiah who would be a strong political and military leader. Straight-forward economic and military power had so often overcome Israel in its conflicts with other nations that they naturally hoped God might give them that same kind of power and leadership to overmatch their opponents. When Isaiah gave this startling prophecy, few had the capacity to understand the idea of power as service and a leader as a servant. This paradox was not understood until it was modeled in the life of Jesus. Even then, however, some were more excited by what His power could add to military conflict with the Romans.

Consider This: Many misunderstood the prophecies about the role of Jesus at His first advent and, therefore, actually wanted His church to be something quite different from what He meant it to be. What about Jesus and His role in the world today might we misunderstand? For example, might we, too, want Jesus' church to have certain types of worldly power and recognition, when He desires servanthood?

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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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED► **STEP 3—Practice!**

Just for Teachers: This step of the learning cycle will assist you in helping your class members find the answer to the following question, **How can I practice the information I just learned?**

Thought Questions:

In light of Jesus' insistence in Matthew 24 that there is no way to know the precise time of Jesus' coming, and that it will be as surprising as a thief's break-in, what is the best way to talk about these end-time prophecies? What can you accurately say about Jesus' coming (for example, it could be soon but will be unexpected), and why should you never say "Jesus will come in July of 2014"?

Application Questions:

- 1 Make a list (on a blackboard, dry erase board, or flip chart if possible) of ten news stories that have grabbed class members' attention this week.
- 2 With Matthew 24 open before them, have the class try to coordinate verses in the chapter with each news story.
- 3 Be creative and interpretive. For example, false Christs and false prophets may bring to mind the almost fanatical attention paid to entertainment and sports figures. Refugees in troubled regions of the world may remind us of Jesus' words about fleeing to the mountains in the end times.
- 4 How useful are these ten news stories in figuring out the precise time of Jesus' return? On the other hand, how might they be useful in reminding us of God's trustworthiness?

Witnessing

You know someone who is constantly setting dates for Christ's return. You also know someone who believes He is returning soon but meanwhile spends a great deal of time helping others in various ways. What type of witness is each person giving to those around them?

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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?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED► **STEP 4—Apply!**

Just for Teachers: In this fourth and final step of the Natural Learning Cycle, you will want to encourage class members to make a life response to the lesson. Help them answer this question: **With God’s help, what can I do with what I have learned from this lesson?**

This story may be fictional, but it makes a good point:

Some seminary students took a break from their studies to play basketball in the gymnasium of a local school. The janitor, an elderly man with white hair, would wait patiently until the seminarians had finished playing. While he waited, he’d read the Bible.

One day a seminarian went up to the janitor and asked, “What are you reading?”

“The book of Revelation,” the man replied.

The seminarian, acquainted with all the difficulties of understanding the book, was surprised. “The book of Revelation!” he said. “Do you understand it?”

“Yes, I understand it,” the old man assured him.

“Really?” the seminarian said. “So tell me, What does it mean?”

“Pretty simple,” the old janitor said. “It means that Jesus is gonna win.”

The seminarian realized that the old janitor knew Revelation better than he did!

Consider This: If you watch the news on television, or read a newspaper, practice this exercise: At the end of each news story, say to yourself, “God anticipated all of this. And no matter how bad it looks, in the end, He’s going to be victorious!”

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:

- ❶ 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?
- ❷ 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?
- ❸ 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?