

# Chapter 1

## Introduction To Prophecy

Most people are very interested in the future. What is going to happen in the days and years ahead? Will things get better or will things get worse? Will there be peace on earth or will there be war? What will happen to planet earth? What will the world be like a hundred years from now? A thousand years from now? Is the world going to come to an end? What happens to people after they die? What lies beyond the grave? These are interesting and very important questions. Can you think of other questions that people might ask about the future? Are YOU interested in what is going to happen in the future?

How can a person learn about the future? How can a person know what the future will bring? Does man really know what will happen in the future (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:14)? \_\_\_\_\_ Why not? When it comes to knowing what will happen in the future, man does not have the answers! Man does not even know what will happen in the next 24 hours! Who does have the answers? Who does know what will happen in the days and years ahead? According to Isaiah 46:9-10, who is the only One who knows all about the future? \_\_\_\_\_

God knows the future and He is able to declare the end from the beginning. Suppose the Yankees were ahead of the Red Sox by a score of 9 to 3 with only one inning to go. Suppose you were at the ball park watching this game. You would probably think that the Yankees would win, but would you know this for sure? It is possible that the Red Sox could win the game by a score of 11 to 10 (or by some other score). We do not know the final score of a baseball game until the game is over. But God knows all about that baseball game before it even starts. Even before the first pitch is thrown, God knows exactly who will win and what the final score will be. God knows all future events that will ever take place.

### God's Predictions Always Come True

Here are just a few examples of God's predictions and their precise fulfillment:

- 1) God predicted that the temple in Jerusalem would be totally destroyed (Matthew 24:2). About 40 years later this was literally fulfilled as the Romans destroyed the temple under Titus.
- 2) God predicted to Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years (Genesis 15:13). Several generations later, following the death of Joseph, this was literally fulfilled (Exodus 1).
- 3) God through Daniel predicted the coming world empires of Persia, Greece and Rome (Daniel 2, Daniel 7, etc.) with such accuracy that unbelieving scholars have insisted that the book of Daniel must have been written at a much later time because no one living in Daniel's day could have known about these future kingdoms!
- 4) In 1 Kings 13:2 God predicted that a man would be born in the line of David by the name of Josiah. The book of 1 Kings was written three centuries before Josiah's birth!
- 5) In Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1 God predicted that a future Persian king would come on the scene by the name of Cyrus. Yet Isaiah wrote this more than 100 years before Cyrus was even born! This is one reason why unbelieving Bible scholars insist that Isaiah could not have written these chapters, because no one in Isaiah's day could have known about this future ruler. But God knows!

Countless other examples of fulfilled prophecy could be given, including all of the prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ's first coming which were literally fulfilled. For example, Micah, writing 700 years before His birth, predicted that God's King would be born in an insignificant town called Bethlehem

(Micah 5:2)! This would be analogous to a man living 200 years before Columbus predicting what town President Bush would be born in!

The Scriptures contain predictions of future events uttered long before they transpired, events that no mere human sagacity or foresight could have anticipated. These predictions are so detailed, minute and specific as to exclude the possibility that they were mere guesses. The only sane explanation for them is that the predictions came from God who knows all future events and who is never wrong in His predictions.

### **The God Who Knows All Future Events**

God knew all about the future of this world even before He created the earth. God has a perfect plan for this world and God is carrying out His plan. Will God bring to pass what He has purposed for this world (Isaiah 46:11)? \_\_\_\_\_ We might be surprised by something we hear on the news. For example we might be surprised to hear that the President was shot. But would God be surprised by this? Why not? We might be surprised to learn that two countries have decided to go to war with each other. Would this come as a surprise to God? \_\_\_\_\_

The Lord knows all about the future. But how do we learn about the future? Does God keep it a secret and not tell anyone? No, it is not a big secret. God has told us about the future, using who are called PROPHETS.

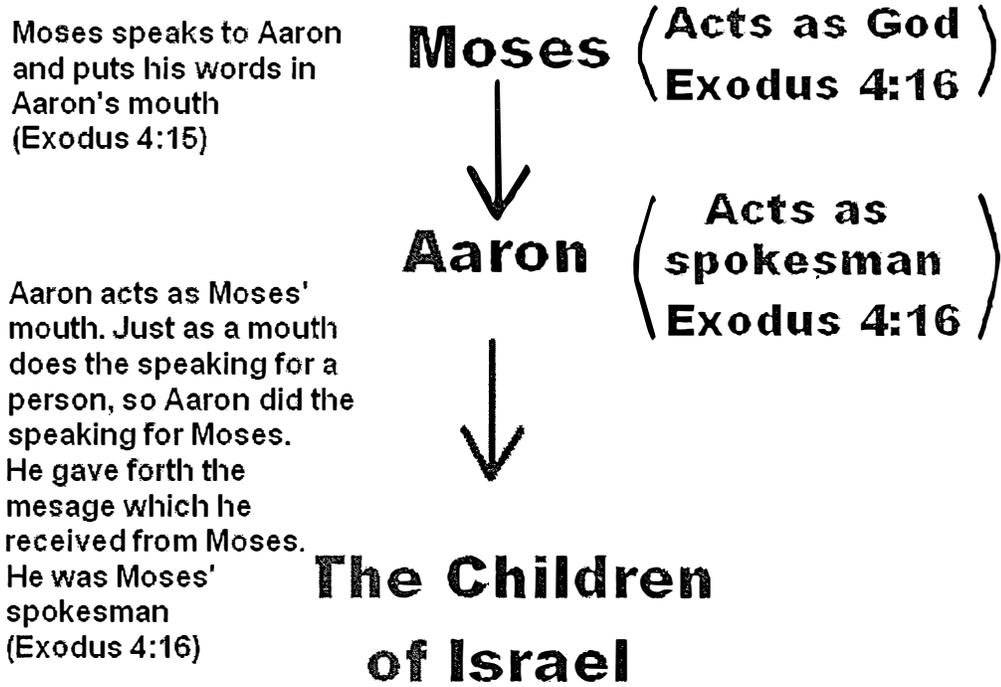
### **What Is A Prophet?**

Can you name some of God's prophets? [Hint: Jeremiah was one of God's prophets]

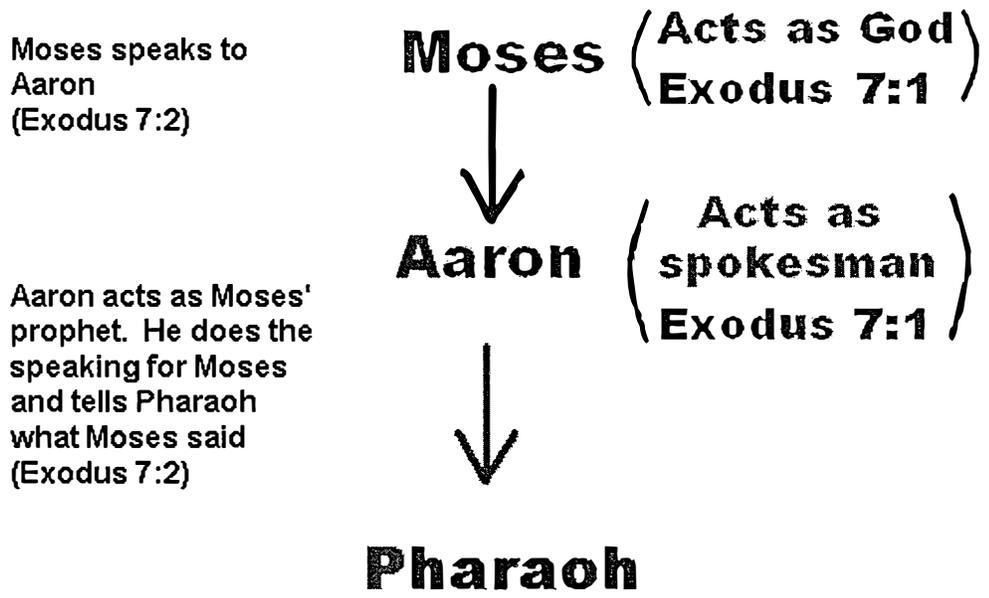
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We can name some of the prophets, but what is a prophet? To find out, let's read Exodus 4: 10-14. God wanted Moses to speak to the children of Israel. Did Moses want to do this (Exodus 4:10)? \_\_\_\_\_ Was God pleased or angry (Exodus 4:14)? \_\_\_\_\_ Who did God choose to do the speaking (Exodus 4:14)? \_\_\_\_\_

Now read Exodus 4:15-16 carefully and look at the following diagram:

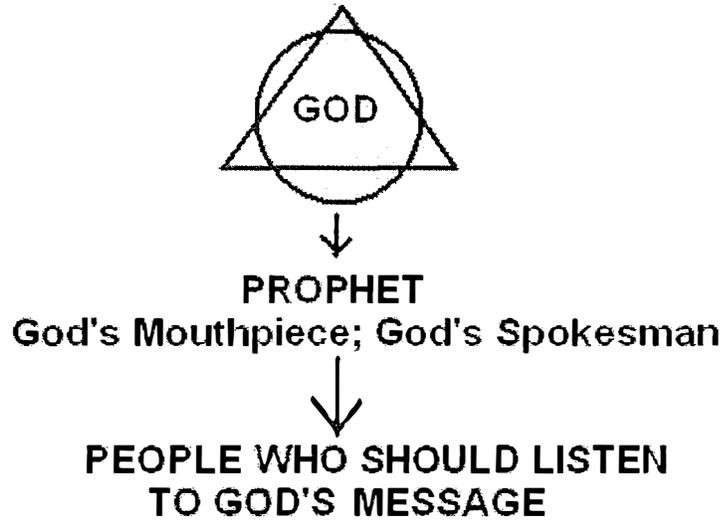


We find the same thing in Exodus chapter 7. Read Exodus 7:1-2. In these two verses we see that God had a message for Pharaoh the King of Egypt. Look again at the diagram:



When we say that Aaron was Moses' prophet what do we mean? We mean that Aaron did the talking for Moses. Aaron was Moses' spokesman or mouthpiece. He spoke the words of Moses.

Every person who is a true prophet of God acts as God's mouth. A prophet speaks God's message:



In Deuteronomy 18:18 God is speaking about His Prophet. Whose words are in a prophet's mouth?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ What does a prophet speak?

Can a true prophet say whatever he wants to say and make up his own message? \_\_\_\_\_

Every true prophet should be able to say what David said in 2 Samuel 23:2: "The Spirit of the LORD \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ and His \_\_\_\_\_ was in my \_\_\_\_\_." God does the speaking. The prophet is just God's mouth. The prophet must give God's message. He must not give his own message. Just as our mouth only says what we want it to say, so also God's prophet only says what God wants him to say.

Look up the following verses and write down the first four words found in each verse: Isaiah 45:1; Jeremiah 19:1; Ezekiel 38:10; Zechariah 8:2.  
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Did Isaiah say: "THUS SAITH ME"? \_\_\_\_\_ It was not Isaiah's message. It was God's message. This is why we call the Bible GOD'S WORD, **not** MAN'S WORD!

### What Was The Prophet's Message?

Sometimes we think of a prophet as someone who predicts what is going to happen in the future. God's prophets certainly did this, but they also did more than this. Their main job was to speak God's message to the people. Sometimes God wanted the people to know about the future but sometimes God just wanted to teach the people His truth. The prophets would not only **FORETELL** (tell what would happen in the future) but they would also **FORTHTELL** (speak forth God's message and speak forth God's truth even if it did not have anything to do with the future). We can see this by looking up the following verses. Read each passage and if the passage is telling about the future, write **FUTURE**. If the passage is not telling about the future, just leave the space blank.

|                         |                                    |                |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. The Prophet Isaiah   | Isaiah 1:16-20<br>Isaiah 2:2-4     | _____<br>_____ |
| 2. The Prophet Jeremiah | Jeremiah 17:5-9<br>Jeremiah 23:5-6 | _____<br>_____ |
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|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 3. The Prophet Zechariah | Zechariah 1:3<br>Zechariah 14:1-4                | _____<br>_____          |
| 4. The PROPHET JESUS     | Matthew 23:25-28<br>Matthew 24:5-14<br>John 14:3 | _____<br>_____<br>_____ |

In this set of notes we want to study what God has said about the future. We want to study those things which were FORETOLD and predicted by God’s prophets.

### The True and the False

There are two kinds of prophets: true prophets (God’s prophets) and false prophets. False prophets are those who pretend that they have God’s message, but they really do not. They pretend that they are speaking for God, but they really are not. God has not even sent them!

How could a person tell a true prophet from a false prophet? God has given us two tests so that we can know the difference:

#### Test Number One--It Must Come To Pass.

This test is found in Deuteronomy 18:21-22. If a prophet says that something is going to happen, then it must come to pass! The prophet must be 100% accurate. He must never be wrong. His prediction must come true.

For example, suppose a prophet were to make this prediction: "Thus saith the Lord; Don’t worry because the enemy will not invade the land. There will be peace in this land for many months." Then two weeks after the prophet says this the enemy comes and invades the land. Is this prophet a true prophet? \_\_\_\_\_ Did God really give him this message? \_\_\_\_\_ How do you know? Does God ever make a mistake about what is going to happen in the future? \_\_\_\_\_ If a prophet is a true prophet then his word "shall come to \_\_\_\_\_" (Jeremiah 28:9).

God is never wrong! When He tells us what will happen in the future we know that it really will happen. If the Bible says it will happen, then we can count on it!

Elijah was a true prophet. One day he told wicked King Ahab that Jezebel (Ahab’s wicked wife) would be eaten by dogs (1 Kings 21:23). Did this happen just like the prophet said (see 2 Kings 9:30-36)? \_\_\_\_\_ God’s prophets always speak the truth!

The prophet Micah said that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Did this come to pass (Luke 2:4)? \_\_\_\_\_ The prophet Daniel said that the Messiah (Christ) would be "CUT OFF" (Daniel 9:26). This means that He would die by a violent death. Did this really happen (John 19:16-10)? \_\_\_\_\_ God’s prophets are never wrong!

What was the punishment for a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20)?

\_\_\_\_\_ To pretend to speak God’s message when you are not really speaking God’s message is very serious! To cause people to think they are hearing God’s message when they really are not could be compared with a doctor giving a person medicine which he promises will cure him when in reality it will actually kill him!

## Test Number Two--It Must Be God's Message.

The second test of a prophet is found in Deuteronomy 13:1-5. What happens if a prophet predicts something and it **does** come to pass. Does this mean that he must be a true prophet? For example, suppose the prophet says, "Thus saith the Lord; the enemy is coming to invade us but we will be ready to meet this army and we will defeat them." Suppose also that the enemy does come and the enemy is defeated. Does this mean that this prophet must be a true prophet?

Sometimes what a false prophet says will happen actually comes to pass (Deuteronomy 13:1-2). God allows it to happen. But look at what the false prophet is saying: "Let us go after \_\_\_\_\_ gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them" (Deut. 13:2). Is this the right kind of message? \_\_\_\_\_ Would God ever tell His people to go after other gods? \_\_\_\_\_ This message is contrary to God's Word and contrary God's Ten Commandments (see Deut. 5:7-9). It is a false message. This prophet is trying to turn the people "away from the \_\_\_\_\_ your God" (Deut. 13:5). Would a true prophet ever give this kind of a message? \_\_\_\_\_ Why not? The sign or prediction must be tested by God's Word. It must not go against or disagree with what God has said. It must agree with what God has said and build upon it. How was the false prophet punished (Deut. 13:5)?

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Suppose there were a man living today who claimed to be God's prophet. One day he says: "On August 28 there will be a great earthquake in California." Suppose that this happens just as he predicted and then the prophet says: "This proves that I am a great prophet of God. Now I want everybody to follow me. Don't believe the Bible because the Bible is filled with stories that are not really true. I'll show you the true way to live." Is this man a true prophet? Why or why not?

## Are There Prophets Today?

We do not need prophets today because we have God's Word the Bible. In the Bible God has told us all that we need to know about the future. If you want God to speak to you today, you do not have to look for someone like Isaiah or Jeremiah or Daniel. Today God's message is found in the Bible. And the Bible is God's complete and finished message. Does God want anything to be added to His Word (Revelation 22:18)? \_\_\_\_\_ Does God want anything to be taken away or subtracted from His Word (Revelation 22:19)? \_\_\_\_\_ The Bible contains everything we need and nothing is missing or lacking. Nothing needs to be added.

If we want to learn about the future, we do not have to find someone with a crystal ball or someone who claims to be able to predict what will happen. The Bible has all of the answers. God warns us about trying to get the answers in the wrong way (see Deut. 18:9-14.). If we want to hear God's message today we can open up the Bible and read it!

This does not mean that the Bible answers every question we can think of about the future. Here are some questions the Bible does not answer:

"What year and what day will Christ return?" (See Matthew 24:36.)

"Who will be elected as the next President?"

"Will I be alive 20 years from now?"

Can you think of any other questions about the future which the Bible does not answer? God does tell us all we need to know about the future and the answers are found in the Bible. We can trust God because He knows **everything** about the future. What we do not know, He does know!

**We do not know what the future holds,  
but we know Who holds the future!**

If we leave God's Word out (neglect and forget the Bible), then we leave God out. God is the only One

with all the answers and all the wisdom. So if we leave God out, we will be in the dark. If a cook refuses to look at the cookbook, how can he or she follow the recipe? The cook must look at the book where the recipe is found.

## Why Is Prophecy Important?

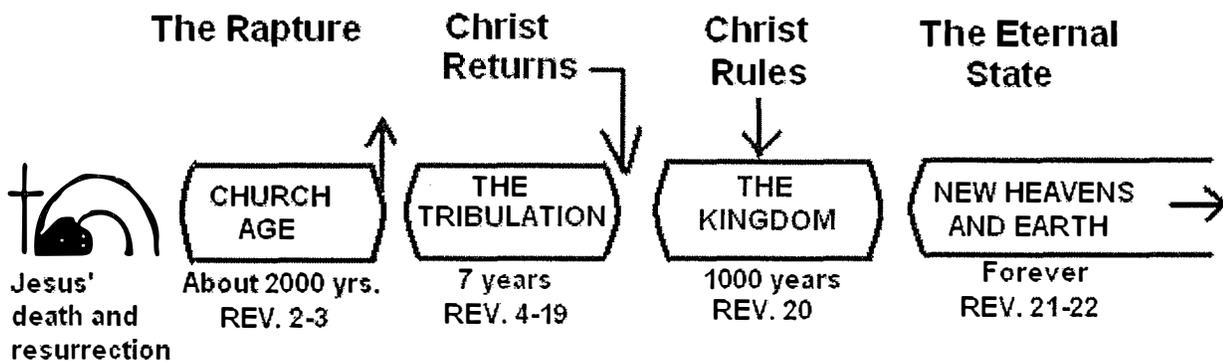
Why does God tell us about the future? Let's look at ten reasons:

1. **Prophecy warns unbelievers.** The future for unbelievers is not a happy one. Death and judgment await them. The wicked are warned about the future again and again (see Proverbs 14:12; 2 Thess. 1:8-9).
2. **Prophecy comforts believers** because their future is bright and happy (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The Bible gives strength to live by and comfort to die by. A believer can bravely face death because he knows what God has said about the future (Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:8).
3. **Prophecy proves that God's Word is true.** No prophecy in the Bible has ever failed. Everything that God has said about the future has come to pass or will come to pass. As we see prophecy being fulfilled we are reminded that God's Word "is \_\_\_\_\_" (John 17:17) and that God "cannot \_\_\_\_\_" (Titus 1:2).
4. **Prophecy gives us a true picture of the world's problems.** As we look at our world we see wars and crime and sin and sickness and all kinds of problems. Without the Bible these things would trouble and disturb us. But God's Word helps us to understand why these things are so, and how they will come to an end.
5. **Prophecy helps us to know what to expect.** A person would be upset and troubled by wars if he thought that there should not be any wars in the world. But Jesus told us to expect wars (Matthew 24:6-7). The believer is not shocked by reports of wars; he expects them. Knowing what to expect also keeps us awake (Romans 13:11). If your family knew that a thief would try to enter the house at 3:00 a.m., would they sleep that night? God has told us about the future so that we can be spiritually awake and ready (1 Thessalonians 5:4-8; Matthew 24:43).
6. **Prophecy increases our understanding of the Bible.** A large part of the Bible is prophetic (tells us about what will happen in the future). If a person does not understand prophecy then he will not understand the Bible. Just as a person would not be very educated if he did not understand arithmetic and mathematics, so a person is not very sharp spiritually if he does not understand prophecy.
7. **Prophecy helps us to know God's will.** If I never learn what the Bible says about the future, then I will not know what God's purpose is for my world and for my life.
8. **Prophecy helps the believer to walk with God.** You cannot walk with God unless you know which way God is moving. In Genesis 18 Abraham needed to know that God was going to judge Sodom. Does God want to hide from us what He is going to do (Gen. 18:17)? \_\_\_\_\_
9. **Prophecy stirs and stimulates us to live a holy and righteous life** (Hosea 14:9). The better we understand the future, the better we will walk with God today. If I really believe that Christ could come at any time, should this make a difference in how I live (Titus 2:11-14)? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Prophecy helps us to help others.** Our unsaved friends do not understand what is going on in the world and to them the future is dark and unknown. We have the answers that they need! We can say, "Let me show you what God says about that." The Jewish people have faced great persecution and horrible terrorist attacks. We can befriend the Jews and help them to understand that God has a wonderful plan and a wonderful future for the nation Israel (Isaiah 2, Isaiah 11, Jeremiah 31, etc.). The better we know the Bible the better we will be able to help others.

## Things To Come

Jesus once said that the Holy Spirit would come and would show them His followers "things to come" (John 16:13). The Spirit of God wants to show us and teach us about future things and about events that are going to come to pass. As we study the Bible with the help of these notes we want to pray and ask the Spirit of Truth to teach us all that we need to know about the future. Here are some of the major events we will be studying:



We will also be learning about different persons: the Lord Jesus Christ, believers, unbelievers, the angels, the devil, the demons, the man of sin (antichrist), the false prophet, etc. As we walk down the road of time we need to understand what lies ahead. May God help us to understand the important prophecies found in His Word so that we will not be in the dark (2 Peter 1:19).

NOTE: The teacher may want to ask one (or more) of the students to explain what will happen in the future as he or she understands it. How much does the student know about "things to come"? Do the students have any concept of the rapture, the tribulation, the kingdom, etc.?

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