

PART 1

FLIGHT PLAN: THE STARTING POINT

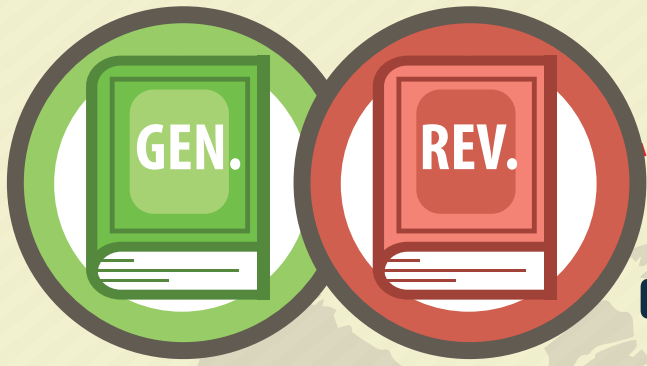
Are you ready to fly? To feel your feet leave the ground? To elevate your thoughts? To broaden your perspective? To deepen your faith?

To fall more in love with your Savior?

If so, then you've started reading the right book. This visual guide to the end times will give you a first-class seat toward a destination designed by God Himself in His Word. Studying Bible prophecy is an encounter in eschatology, or the study of the end times. It's like a long journey, sometimes challenging, and not without its dangers. We've chosen to portray this journey like taking a flight on an airplane. And like any flight, there is preparation, a flight plan, a time to board, a relay of safety instructions, a notification to buckle up, a time for takeoff, the enjoyment of the flight itself, and finally, landing at your destination. This book is both your boarding pass and your in-flight guide. We encourage you to take advantage of every section, and to fully enjoy the journey. And when you turn the last page of this book, our prayer is that you will indeed be blessed (Revelation 1:3) and, most importantly, more closely fellowship with the One who both scripts and supervises the future (Revelation 19:10).

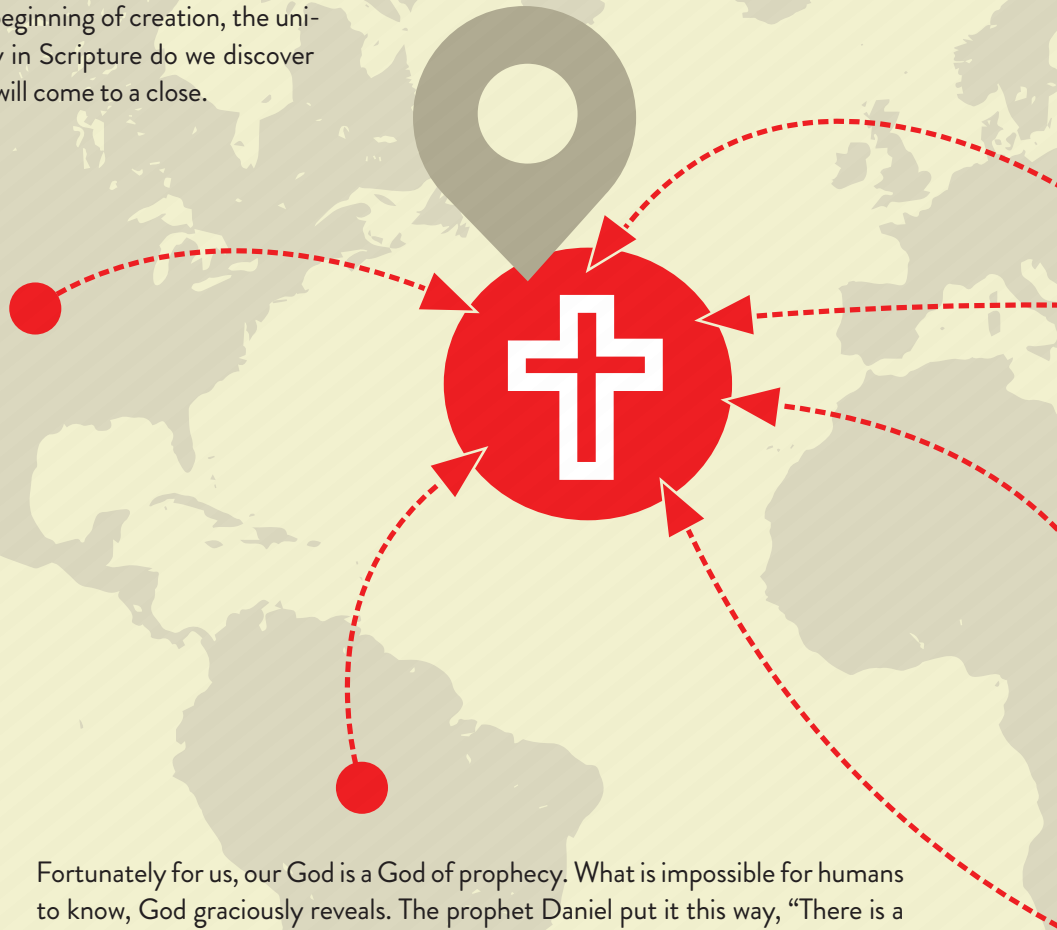
Jeff Kinley
TODD AMPSON





THE DESTINATION OF BIBLE PROPHECY

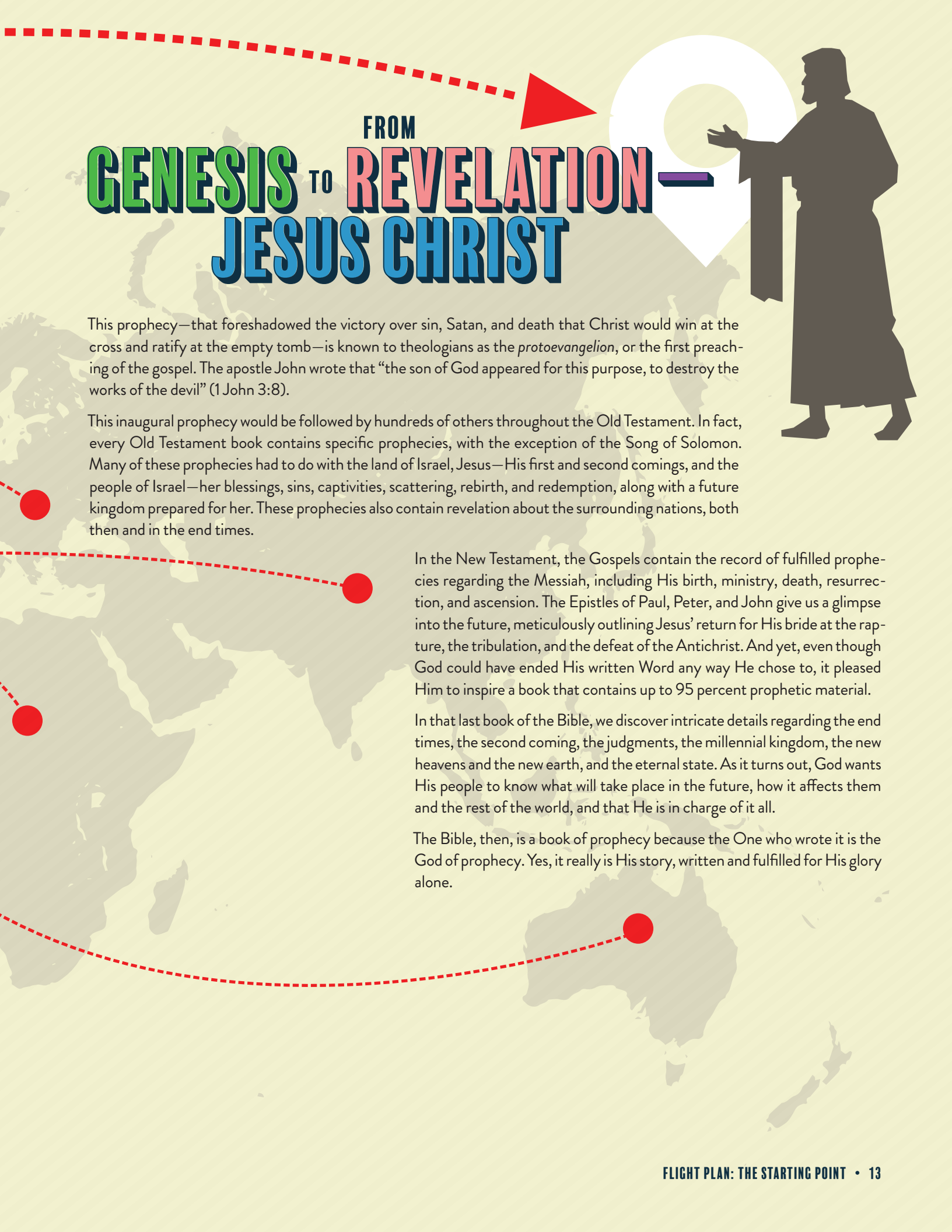
It has correctly been said of God that history is “His story.” And why not? For if there is a God, and He is indeed the God of the Bible, then Scripture is not only true and reliable, but necessary for life itself. Only in the Bible do we find the record of the beginning of creation, the universe, the earth, and humanity. And only in Scripture do we discover how things will end and how history itself will come to a close.



Fortunately for us, our God is a God of prophecy. What is impossible for humans to know, God graciously reveals. The prophet Daniel put it this way, “There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries” (Daniel 2:28).

One of those mysteries is revealed early on in the very first book of the Bible. Devastated by their disobedience and the fall that infected the human race with sin, Adam and Eve were cursed by God, but not before the slithering serpent that started the whole debacle. He too received a pronouncement of judgment. Embedded within this sentence was bad news for him, but good news for mankind:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel (Genesis 3:15).



FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION JESUS CHRIST

This prophecy—that foreshadowed the victory over sin, Satan, and death that Christ would win at the cross and ratify at the empty tomb—is known to theologians as the *protoevangelion*, or the first preaching of the gospel. The apostle John wrote that “the son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

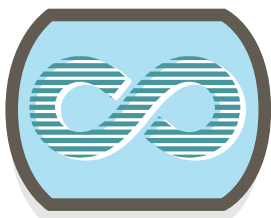
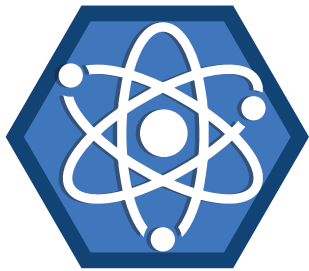
This inaugural prophecy would be followed by hundreds of others throughout the Old Testament. In fact, every Old Testament book contains specific prophecies, with the exception of the Song of Solomon. Many of these prophecies had to do with the land of Israel, Jesus—His first and second comings, and the people of Israel—her blessings, sins, captivities, scattering, rebirth, and redemption, along with a future kingdom prepared for her. These prophecies also contain revelation about the surrounding nations, both then and in the end times.

In the New Testament, the Gospels contain the record of fulfilled prophecies regarding the Messiah, including His birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension. The Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John give us a glimpse into the future, meticulously outlining Jesus’ return for His bride at the rapture, the tribulation, and the defeat of the Antichrist. And yet, even though God could have ended His written Word any way He chose to, it pleased Him to inspire a book that contains up to 95 percent prophetic material.

In that last book of the Bible, we discover intricate details regarding the end times, the second coming, the judgments, the millennial kingdom, the new heavens and the new earth, and the eternal state. As it turns out, God wants His people to know what will take place in the future, how it affects them and the rest of the world, and that He is in charge of it all.

The Bible, then, is a book of prophecy because the One who wrote it is the God of prophecy. Yes, it really is His story, written and fulfilled for His glory alone.

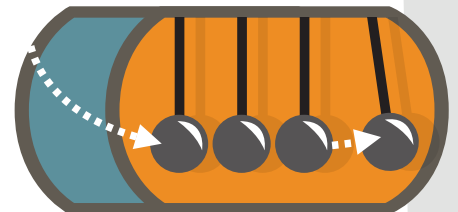
ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN REVELATION



The Bible, above everything else, is a book about God. Though throughout the pages of Scripture we are provided valuable information about creation, humanity, Israel, the nations, the church, angels and devils, sin and salvation, it is God Himself who is the central character. What began from Him will end with Him; as Paul wrote, “From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36).

It comes as no surprise then that the last book of the Bible would conclude God’s written revelation by deepening our understanding of our wonderful Lord. Though we typically view Revelation primarily as a prophetic guide to the future, as it turns out, there is an even more important theme than the apocalypse embedded within, and our first clue is found in the opening verse, “The revelation of *Jesus Christ*...” (Revelation 1:1, emphasis added).

This apocalyptic vision didn’t merely come to John *from* Jesus, but rather, its contents are also *about* Jesus. In chapter 1, the risen, glorified Christ is revealed to John. In chapters 2 and 3, He stands as the reprove of His churches. In chapter 4, He is sovereign, sitting upon His heavenly throne, being worshipped by the angelic hosts and the redeemed, rewarded bride. In chapter 5, He alone is worthy to break the seal, securing the title deed to planet Earth. In chapters 6 through 18, He inaugurates the tribulation-era judgments that devastate humanity and the world. In chapter 7, He is the gracious God who ignites a mighty last-days revival, saving untold millions from every nation, tribe, people group, and language. In chapter 19, He triumphantly returns to earth, faithfully fulfilling His promise. In Revelation



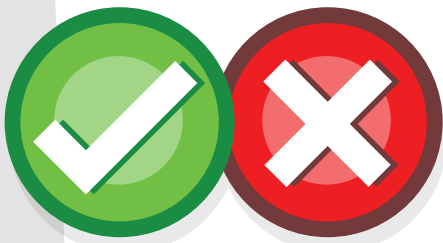
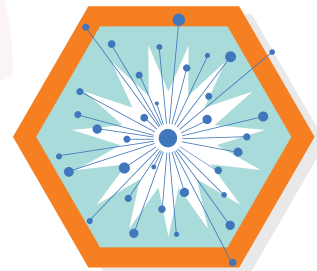
20, He reigns supremely for 1,000 years upon His throne in Jerusalem. In that same chapter, He also exercises His righteousness, judging billions of condemned unbelievers to an eternal lake of fire. In chapter 21, He recreates a new heaven and new earth, providing an eternal abode and a new Jerusalem for all the redeemed of the ages to enjoy. And in chapter 22, He lovingly issues a final invitation to all those who are presently alive to “come...Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17 NKJV).

Revelation reminds us that the churches are His. The judgments we read of in Revelation belong to God and come from God. The earth’s kingdoms and nations will be ruled by Him. We are reminded that Armageddon’s victory is His. That all Israel will be saved by Him. That He is reprovder, redeemer, rescuer, righteous judge, and the recreator and restorer of all things (Revelation 21:5).

From this we can conclude that Revelation goes far beyond information regarding the apocalypse or merely satisfying our prophetic curiosity. In fact, the book becomes one of Scripture’s deepest theological studies, yielding great insights into the character and attributes of God. So if we want to engage in a solid devotional and really get to know our God, Revelation really is a good place to be.

The angel who delivered Revelation’s message understood this, declaring to John, “Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

May your study of Revelation and all of Bible prophecy (including this book) inspire you toward a greater knowledge and love of Jesus Christ!





THE IMPORTANCE OF FULFILLED PROPHECY

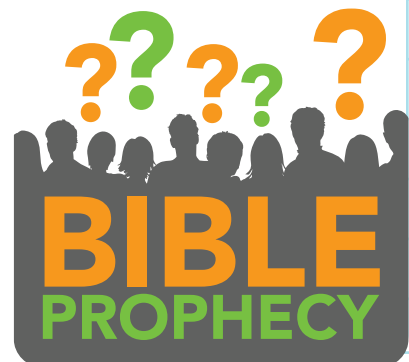
Anywhere from 28–30 percent of the Bible was prophetic at the time it was written. That’s close to one-third of Scripture. This fact tells us that Bible prophecy is important to God, and therefore, should be to us as well. Though estimates vary depending on how one calculates past prophecies, up to 80 percent of the more than 8,000 prophetic verses found in God’s Word have already been fulfilled. Not only is that an incredibly impressive track record, but it also unlocks critical intel regarding God, the Bible, humanity, and the future. Let’s take a brief look at each of these, and see what we can learn.

FULFILLED PROPHECY AND GOD

The source of all prophecy, or accurately predicting future events, is God. No man, angel, or demon has the power or knowledge to forecast the future. Because God is timeless and infinite, He exists outside of the boundaries of measured time. In other words, He did not have a beginning or a moment of creation like everything else has. The psalmist put it this way, “From everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalm 90:2). This is the eternity of God. But His knowledge is also infinite as well. In other words, God knows everything that is, was, will be, or could be. The Lord never learns anything. He cannot. So He has always known the future, even before it was prophetically written down by His prophets.

Further, God also possesses unlimited power to cause His prophetic revelations to come to pass. God said to Isaiah, “From eternity I am He. And there is no one who can rescue from My hand; I act, and who can reverse it?” (Isaiah 43:13 NASB). Elsewhere, Job replied to the Lord, “I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted” (Job 42:2 NIV). A final truth we learn about God from fulfilled prophecy is His faithfulness. Again Isaiah records, “Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, I will certainly do it” (Isaiah 46:11 NASB).

This is just one reason why Jesus, in Revelation, is called “the faithful witness” (1:5), “the faithful and true witness” (3:14 NIV), and “Faithful and True” (19:11). Jesus is the ultimate promise keeper. Therefore, fulfilled Bible prophecy tells us that God is timeless, infinite, omniscient (possessing all knowledge), omnipotent (possessing all power), and faithful. What a God!



PRE-FLIGHT CHECKLIST

FULFILLED PROPHECY AND THE BIBLE

Fulfilled prophecies show us that the Bible can be trusted. Statistically speaking, if 100 percent of all past prophecies have been fulfilled literally and precisely as prophesied, then we have every reason to believe that all future prophecies will be fulfilled in the same manner. Put another way, Scripture's pristine prophetic track record preauthenticates all remaining unfulfilled prophecies. This means that the Bible is a trustworthy and reliable source of truth. In fact, it's the only pure source of truth there is. And it also makes sense to conclude that if Scripture has always gotten it right regarding the future, then God's Word can also be trusted when it speaks to issues related to other areas, such as science, history, morality, virtue, and sexuality. In reality, the Bible has yet to be proven inaccurate in any of these areas.

HOLY BIBLE

SEE INSIDE FOR
8,000
PROPHECY
VERSES

ALL PREVIOUS
PROPHECIES
WERE LITERALLY FULFILLED
SO
ALL FUTURE
PROPHECIES
WILL BE LITERALLY FULFILLED

FULFILLED PROPHECY AND HUMANITY

Fulfilled prophecy reminds us that no human should be trusted regarding predictions of the future. Palm readers; fortune tellers; modern-day, so-called prophets; and all who would claim to foretell the future are automatically invalidated and disqualified due to their finite nature and limited knowledge. At best, all we can say regarding the future with any degree of confidence is what God Himself has already prophesied in His Word.

FULFILLED PROPHECY AND THE FUTURE

Because of fulfilled prophecy, the future is not only known by God, but also guaranteed to take place exactly as described in Scripture. This is not to be confused with fatalism or determinism, both of which are not found in the Bible. Instead, future prophecy reflects the wise plan of an all-powerful, loving, and holy God who is bringing history toward a dramatic conclusion. God is telling a grand story, and causing it to be played out on the stage of history. And it is doubly important because we get to participate in it! This is yet another reason why pastors, churches, and individual Christians should not ignore Bible prophecy or dismiss it. Rather, we should engage it, embrace it, and experience the many benefits it brings to our lives.

PROPHECY STATISTICS

28%
OF THE BIBLE CONTAINS PROPHECY

1 OUT OF **30**
VERSES CONTAINS PROPHECY

8,000+
TOTAL VERSES CONTAIN PROPHECY

23 OF **27**
NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS MENTION
THE RETURN OF CHRIST



WHY BIBLE PROPHECY?

There are four primary reasons why we should pay special attention to Bible prophecy in these last days:



Because the bride of Christ must be awake and prepared for the coming of Christ (Revelation 2–3). Jesus exhorted the church at Smyrna to “wake up” (Revelation 3:2). According to a recent study, biblical interaction is at an alarming low, with less than 10 percent of American adults engaging with the Bible one time per week, and 29 percent never reading it at all.¹ This biblical illiteracy leads to theological bankruptcy, which contributes to spiritual weakness and ineffectiveness. No wonder the church is having little impact on our culture. This theological void presents itself in our ability to discern the times and understand eschatology. Every believer is meant to read, study, and understand Bible prophecy (Revelation 1:3).



The church should be urgent because the era of the Antichrist approaches. Right now, we are witnessing the infrastructure for the Antichrist’s one-world governance system emerge through worldwide crises, technological advances that are “shrinking” the world, the development of a global digital currency, and repeated calls from the international community to unite the nations (Daniel 2; 7; Revelation 13). As in John’s day, we are now witnessing a growing spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). Because of this, the church’s stewardship of time here is quickly coming to an end.



Departures

FLIGHT 1919

WHY NOW?



3

We must be urgent because the state of humanity is in rapid decline. A cloud of deception and depravity is sweeping the planet. We see it in society's blatant rejection of God and His Word and through the decline of morality, decency, and human dignity. Lawlessness in the streets, the transgender delusion, and the unashamed, ongoing mass slaughter of innocent babies each day all point to this reality (Matthew 24:37; Romans 1:18-32; Revelation 16:9, 11, 21). This deception will reach a fever pitch during the tribulation, with God Himself delivering rebellious, Christ-rejectors to a divine delusion, thus cutting off any chance of salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 14:9-11).

4

Because the Lord's return is imminent (Romans 13:11-12; Titus 2:13; James 5:8; 1 Peter 4:7; John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-16). The Bible clearly indicates that the rapture is a signless event and could occur at any time. In light of this reality, we have no time to waste. Therefore, we must be Christians who live on mission (Matthew 28:18-20), with expectancy (Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13; James 5:8), pursuing biblical discernment (1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:18), displaying the light, love, and truth of Jesus (Matthew 5:14-16; Acts 1:8).

The nature of prophecy is to warn, alert, awake, and to exhibit an anticipatory spirit.

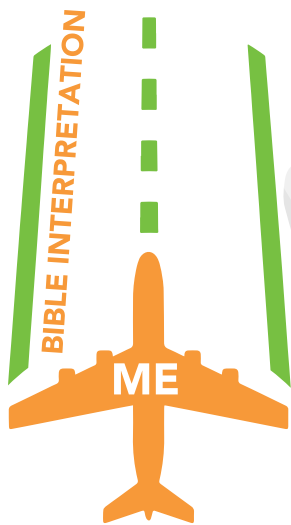
It creates alertness. Vigilance. Attention. An observant spirit. It means to be watchful. Heads up. On your toes. *Ready.*

Urgency doesn't mean to panic, fear, or even to move fast. Instead, it means to be intentional. Purposeful. And focused within the allotted time.

Brothers and sisters, let's get it done, for the time is short, and our Lord is worth it!

NOW BOARDING!

INTERPRETATION METHODS



To have a successful flight, we must make sure we are on a well-maintained plane with a working instrument panel, have a solid flight plan, and position our nose on the correct runway. These preparations are needed so that we will arrive at the proper destination—interpreting Bible prophecy accurately.

Here are the four approaches to eschatology that have been used throughout church history:

THE IDEALIST VIEW: PROPHECY IS ALLEGORY

An allegory is something that is not to be taken literally, but points to something else. The idealist school of thought arose around AD 190 from the area of Alexandria, Egypt, and was adopted by the fifth-century theologian Augustine of Hippo. This view became the official church position up to and beyond the Reformation (1517).

THE PRETERIST VIEW: THE PROPHECIES HAVE ALREADY HAPPENED

The preterist view puts forth the notion that the book of Revelation is strictly a symbolic picture of first-century events (i.e., the Roman attack on Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in AD 70), rather than a revealing of future events that will occur at the end of the church age.

There is a spectrum of preterist positions, from partial to full-preterism, that depend on how many of these events are believed to have already taken place.



FIGURATIVE/INCONSISTENT

JUST ALLEGORY

IDEALIST

OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY

HISTORICIST

ALREADY HAPPENED

PRETERIST

LITERAL FULFILLMENT

FUTURIST

CONSISTENT HERMENEUTIC

THE HISTORICIST VIEW: PROPHECY IS MERELY AN OVERVIEW OF HISTORY

This view first appeared around AD 300 and attempts to interpret Revelation simply as a symbolic representation of the historical timeline of church history from the apostle John's time to the end. This view was popular during the Reformation era, but has many snags and versions.

THE FUTURIST VIEW: PROPHECY UNDERSTOOD LITERALLY

This view teaches that the end-time prophetic events described in Revelation are yet-future and will literally come to pass. The futurist view asserts that the hundreds of prophecies in the Bible that have already been fulfilled were fulfilled literally, not figuratively; there is no indication anywhere in Scripture that God suggests to switch to a new method of understanding prophecy; and the clear nature and pattern of Bible prophecy is: A prophecy is given, then, at a later time it is fulfilled, just as described.

TWO RUNWAYS

Using our plane analogy, there are only two runways (categories of interpretive thought) to choose from when it comes to interpreting end-times Bible prophecy—allegorical or literal.

Either Scripture can be spiritualized, with the interpreter deciding which passages have symbolic meaning, or all of Scripture is meant to be taken literally and understood by the plain and clear meanings of the words themselves.



The idealist, preterist, and historicist views all spiritualize (i.e., allegorize) Scripture in some fashion—opening the passage in question to interpretations that may stray from what the original writer intended.

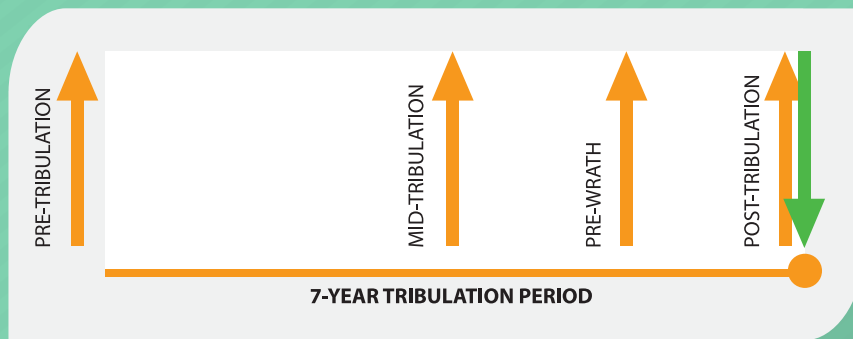
The futurist view is the only approach that maintains a consistent literal understanding of Scripture from beginning to end. Just as fulfilled Bible prophecy was fulfilled literally and to the detail, so too will future prophecies about the end times and the return of Christ.



THE **VARIOUS MAJOR VIEWS**

The choice of runways from the previous page will impact how one views end-times prophecies. Because there is no single passage that provides every detail chronologically, in order to take flight with a logical timeline, the Bible student must consider all related prophetic details.

While what follows are not essential beliefs for salvation, logically, there can only be one correct view for each topic. Believers should study each view to see what aligns best with details of Scripture in total. Brotherly love, along with a spirit of unity and humility, should be evident when encountering others who hold a different view. We are called to be patient and gentle with one another (2 Timothy 2:24).



THE FOUR MOST-COMMONLY HELD VIEWS OF THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

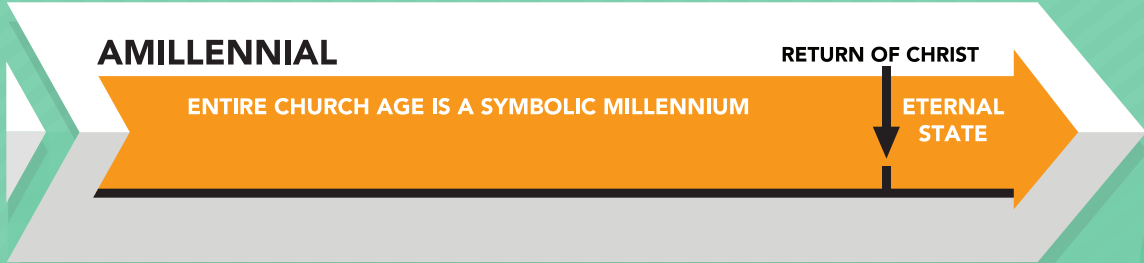
The Pretribulation View This view holds that the rapture will occur prior to the start of Daniel's seventieth week (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; Revelation 3:10), the tribulation period begins with a seven-year peace treaty brokered by the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7), and Christ will return with the armies of heaven (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 25:31; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Jude 14; Revelation 19:14) at the end of the seven-year period.

The Midtribulation View This view holds that Jesus will return at the halfway point of the seven-year tribulation. This halftime point represents the separation between the tribulation and the great tribulation. Here, Jesus' return coincides with the Antichrist's invasion of the Jewish temple and the enforcement of the mark of the beast (Revelation 12-13).

The Pre-Wrath View This view holds that the seven seal judgments will span the entire seven-year tribulation period (with the other 14 judgments scattered throughout) and asserts that God's wrath does not occur until the sixth seal—roughly five-and-a-half years into the tribulation. Believers are rescued when the sixth seal is opened (Revelation 6:12) and God's wrath begins to be poured out.

The Posttribulation View This view holds that Christians will endure all the tribulation and its horrific judgments. They will suffer and be persecuted (and some supernaturally protected), after which they will be raptured just before Christ returns at His second coming.

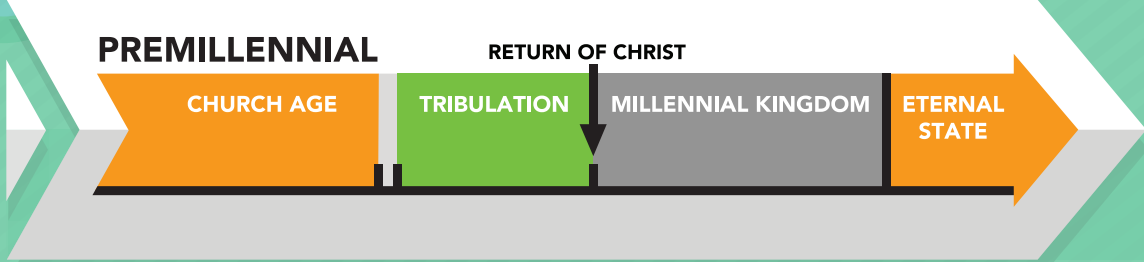
THE THREE MOST-COMMONLY HELD VIEWS ABOUT THE NATURE AND TIMING OF THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM



This view holds that the millennium is not a literal 1,000-year period but is merely symbolic of the entire church age, with Christ returning at some time in the future.



This view holds that the church will evangelize the world to such a degree that it will usher in the second coming of Christ.



This view holds that Christ will return prior to a literal, future 1,000-year kingdom ruled by the Savior. This view sees God’s unconditional promises to Abraham and David as literal, with their fulfillment in a future kingdom where Israel will enjoy the full extent of the land promised by God and Christ will reign from David’s throne (Genesis 12:1; 15:18-21; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; 1 Kings 4:21).