

BASIC BIBLE PRINCIPLES

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

*“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).
“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe” (Jno. 14:29).*

Bible prophecy is of vital importance to those who have confessed their belief in the “things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ” at their baptism. Such a belief requires an acceptance that since Eden God has foretold future events, and is controlling and influencing the affairs of the world and individual lives. The two quotations above confirm, firstly, that God’s plans are made known to men and women in advance, and, secondly, that when prophecy is fulfilled, it encourages the faith of those who have received the prophecies.

1 Bible prophecies are given to:

- Reveal the true God, and that He is in control
- Reveal the future
- Explain the present
- Encourage faith and motivate witness
- Identify where believers are in God’s time scale
- Convince those whom God is calling
- Confirm the truth of God’s Word the Scriptures

(Deut. 18:20-22; Isa. 43:9-12; 48:3-8; Jer. 28; Dan. 2:20-22,28,31-45; Jude vv. 14,15; Rev. 4:1)

2 Only God can accurately foretell the future

Prophecy is not conjecture, nor a demonstration of passive foreknowledge by God (that is, that God knows what will happen and fits His purpose around events without influencing them). Prophecy is a direct message from God, not human speculation, and Scripture emphasises this with phrases such as “the LORD shall bring”, “I will turn thee back”, “the most High ruleth”.

(Deut. 28:36,49,64; Ezek. 38:1,4; Dan. 4:17,35; Acts 1:6,7; 17:26,30,31; Rev. 2:5)

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed . . . For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:19-21)

3 God gave signs of the times to previous generations

There are numerous prophecies of the return of Jesus, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth, and what this Kingdom will be like, but God has not left a void from Eden to the return of Jesus. Every generation has had the sign (miracle) of fulfilled prophecy, often witnessing it happening for themselves:

- Moses expected the Hebrews to recognise the times (*Acts 7:25; Gen. 15:13; 50:24*)
- Daniel understood the times from the writing of Jeremiah (*Dan. 9:2*)
- Jesus expected his followers to identify the times from Daniel (*Mt. 24:15-18*)
- Paul warned the ecclesias of the sign of apostasy (*Acts 20:29-31; 2 Thess. 2:3-12*)
- John taught the first-century believers to identify antichrist (*1 Jno. 2:18; 4:1-3*)

4 Jesus Christ was the sign of the times to his own generation

The religious leaders of Israel did not recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah, and he condemned the Pharisees and Sadducees for being unable to “discern the signs of the times” (Mt. 16:1-4). They wanted a sign (miracle) that would show conclusively that Jesus was the Son of God. They were blind to the signs that abounded, and were not able to accept *the* sign of their generation, the death and resurrection of Jesus, the greatest sign heaven could give. The birth, ministry, trial, death and resurrection of our Lord all fulfilled prophecy, and Jesus instructed his disciples in these.

(Mt. 2:1-6; Mk. 1:1-3; Mt. 21:1-9; Jno. 1:37-51; Mk. 7:6; Jno. 19:24,28,36,37; Lk. 24:25-27,44-47)

5 God has given us signs of the times also in these last days

This generation has seen some tremendous signs come to pass, and we must be on our guard to ensure that we are not ensnared by the things of this life, which will cause us to be blind to the hand of God at work and leave us unprepared for the coming of the Master. Disregarding prophecy or listening to false prophets will have disastrous consequences.

(Lk. 21:34-36; 1 Thess. 5:1-4; 2 Pet. 3:11,12; Mt. 7:15-23)

Signs for us include the following:

- The regathering of Israel (*Jer. 30:11; 31:10,28,35-37; Ezek. 37:1-14*)
- Jerusalem returned to Jewish control (*Lk. 21:24*)
- Libya, Ethiopia, Persia (Iran) same political persuasion (*Ezek. 38:5; Dan. 11:43*)
- The state of the world: Distress, perplexity, fear (*Lk. 21:25,26*)
Immorality (*Lk. 17:28-30; Gen. 13:13; 18:20*)
Godlessness (*2 Tim. 3:1-7*)
Corruption and violence (*Lk. 17:26,27; Gen. 6:11*)
- An explosion of knowledge (*Dan. 12:4*)
- An expansion of military might, particularly in the Middle East (*Joel 3:9-14*)
- A reunited Europe with a strong apostate religious influence dominated by a particular nation or region (*Dan. 8:23-25; 11:36-39; Rev. 17; Ezek. 38:1-7*)
- A change from the east-west divide of nations to a north-south, particularly in relation to the Middle East (*Dan. 11:40*)
- The search for peace and prosperity in the Middle East by Israel (*Ezek. 38:10-12*)

The unfolding of God’s prophetic message in our day and age is a great encouragement to the faithful disciples, for “when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Lk. 21:28) is the exhortation of Jesus. These things confirm for us the truth of God’s declaration:

I am the LORD: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them” (Isa. 42:8,9).

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