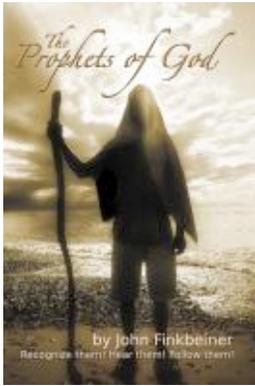


# *The Prophets of God*

A silhouette of a person, likely a prophet, stands on a beach at sunset. The person is wearing a long, flowing robe and a head covering, and is holding a long, thin staff in their right hand. The background is a dramatic sky with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the scene. The ocean waves are visible in the distance, and the beach is covered in dark pebbles and sand.

by John Finkbeiner

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# The Prophets of God



by John F. Finkbeiner

***Recognize them! Hear them! Follow them!***

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## The Prophet

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Ask me what a mother's love is like and I can tell you. I have no problem describing the nurturing warmth the term "motherhood" brings to mind. For instance, I recall when, as an over-sensitive teenager, the day the notion that I was poor came over me like a dark shadow.

Times were a bit tough by American standards. I was in the middle of a growth spurt with only one shirt and pants that fit. In my mind, that meant I was a poor. Later, I learned that during the era known in America as "The Great Depression," my mother wore a borrowed school dress. That weekend she drove me to town to choose a nice new shirt. All was well.

When I was a child, my mother offered me guidance from *Proverbs*. If I needed her, she was available. I remember her soft cheek, always ready to receive a kiss. I am no expert on motherhood, yet I know a mother's love. I know it from experience.

When it comes to recognizing God's prophets, all we need is one good example. We have one in Jesus. He is the real thing. He has been patiently waiting for our interest on prophets and prophecy.

### *The beginning*

Only the God of the Bible accurately declares what will soon take place. What other god announces his plans through his prophets and then fulfills them? What other god is "the First and the Last," "the Beginning and the End?" Who reveals what happened before time and when time is no more? Where else but in the Bible can seekers go to get the truth about what is coming?

In creation and in prophecy, the Lord distances himself from all other gods and/or religions. Since creation is past, the debate about origins is open to skeptics and religious zealots. Prophecy alone settles the matter regarding who is telling the truth. Only one God, the One who calls himself Creator, can make the claim of complete accuracy regarding future events and then back it up.

## *The Prophets of God*

Actually, the whole Bible is prophetic. In *Genesis 3*, for example, after Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, the Lord pronounced a curse on the ground that he had blessed at creation. Then he declared punishment on the woman and destruction upon the serpent.

To the serpent, God said,

*“And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
**he will crush your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”***

*Genesis 3:15*

This prophecy foretells Christ’s future agony and victory. We learn that there remains hostility (enmity) between God and the serpent. The woman’s offspring will crush the serpent’s head, putting an end to his wicked ways. Before it is over, the serpent will strike a blow as well.

While still in *Genesis*, we look at Abram. God told him to leave his home and go to a land that he would show him. Before his departure, God promised Abram and his future descendants that...

*“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all the peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you.”*

*Genesis 12:2-3*

Years ago, American author Robert Fulghum wrote the popular book: *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. We might paraphrase his title this way: “All We Really Need to Know About Prophecy We Learn in Genesis.” It is the book of beginnings.

### *Smoke and fire*

God made special promises to Abraham’s fourth generation of descendants. An important prophecy in *Genesis 15* focused on the

twelve sons of his grandson, Jacob.<sup>1</sup> Seventy of Jacob's family moved from the famine-stricken land of Canaan to live in Goshen in Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

While there, they prospered. As they grew into a great multitude, a ruler emerged who was hostile toward Jacob's family. His fear of their numbers turned to hate as this Pharaoh enslaved the children of Israel.

God heard their cries. He raised up a leader, a deliverer to rescue them out of their bondage. Four hundred and thirty years after their exile—to the day—Jacob's offspring left Egypt for good.<sup>3</sup> When they departed, it was as a mighty nation with great possessions.

They entered Egypt as a family. There they became a people and then slaves. When they called on the Lord, he heard their cry and delivered them. They exited an estimated two million strong.<sup>4</sup>

Lovingly, the Lord continued to refer to his people as "Jacob." God gave Abraham's grandson Jacob another name to replace his birth name. God named him "Israel," which translated means "he struggles with God."<sup>5</sup> No name appears more often in the Bible than that of Israel, the name the Lord gave us for his people. In understanding prophecy, we go off course if we do not make Israel, the people who struggle with God, our link between past and future events.

When the Israelites were far from their former slave-masters, God led them into Arabia, to a mountain there called Sinai.<sup>6</sup> Earlier, on the same mount, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush. It was then that God's servant, Moses, learned his identity and purpose.<sup>7</sup> Later, at Sinai together with Moses, the Israelites, too, were on holy ground. While God spoke to them in the smoke and fire, the sons and daughters of Jacob found out they were the people of God.

God chose Israel as his treasured possession. Their salvation out of Egypt had an enduring purpose. They were to be *a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*.<sup>8</sup> Yet fear got the best of them. Instead of

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<sup>1</sup> *Genesis 15:12-16*

<sup>2</sup> *Exodus 1:5 (Acts 7:14)*

<sup>3</sup> *Exodus 12:40-41*

<sup>4</sup> *Exodus 12:37*

<sup>5</sup> *Genesis 32:27-28*

<sup>6</sup> *Galatians 4:25*

<sup>7</sup> *Exodus 3:1-10*

<sup>8</sup> *Exodus 19:3-6*

*The Prophets of God*

desiring or welcoming God's presence—a prerequisite for priests—most wanted to stay a safe distance from him.

When God came down to speak to the Israelites, the Lord gave the command that they were not to come near the holy mountain or touch it or they would die. In preparation for the Lord's visit, the people spent three days making sure they were ceremonially clean.<sup>9</sup>

*On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him....*

*When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."*

*Exodus 19:16-19, 20:18-19*

Moses explained God's purpose behind the fearsome display of his power and glory.

*"Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."*

*Exodus 20:20*

It was within this backdrop of smoke and fire that the Lord gave the Israelites his laws and regulations. God's demonstration of power and control over nature filled his people with awe and fear.

*To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.*

*Exodus 24:17*

As a priest of God—and remember that Israel was to be a kingdom of priests—one must enter the Lord's presence in holiness, without spot, blemish or wrinkle. Israel rejected this role. It took too much effort

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<sup>9</sup> *Exodus 19:9-15*

to remain holy so they opted out of their responsibility. As priests, they falsely believed that death waited for them in God's presence, even if they did all that the Lord commanded.

*Listen to him!*

The pagans that Israel encountered along the way to the Promised Land wanted to know the future. People have always sought insight about tomorrow, but God forbade his people to consult mediums, sorcerers and spiritists. He told them they must stay away from anyone engaged in divination, witchcraft, astrology, occultism and the like. The Lord decreed that such things were detestable. These abominations and others was the reason why God commanded Israel to drive these wicked polluters out of Canaan. His people had to be different.<sup>10</sup>

In reference to Moses, God made a promise to the Israelites

*"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."*

*Deuteronomy 18:17b-19*

The people asked that Moses serve as their go-between, or mediator. They did not want to endure another encounter with a holy God. When he wanted to tell them something, the Lord spoke to Moses. They, on the other hand, were to obey every word Moses said.

Because Moses would not always be their leader, the Lord promised that he would send his people another prophet, a brother from within the Israelite family. If they remembered what Moses did and said, then recognizing God's next prophet would not be difficult.

As to gaining insight into the future, the Lord would grant it but there was a warning: Impostors would come. They would claim that God had given them a vision but their claims were false. The decree from God was that these liars *must be put to death*.<sup>11</sup>

How were the fakes to be exposed? How could the people know whether their message really came from God? The Bible tells us:

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<sup>10</sup> *Deuteronomy 18:9-14*

<sup>11</sup> *Deuteronomy 18:20b*

*The Prophets of God*

*“If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.”*

*Deuteronomy 18:22*

Looking back on the history of Israel, trouble began when they failed to distinguish between those who spoke for God and those who spoke falsely. Even though prophecies failed to come true, the Israelites still rewarded false prophets. They should have stoned them.

History is repeating itself. Nations and peoples are in trouble because they listen to imposters. In recent times, one dire prediction has followed another. The A-Bomb; over-population; global warming, the spread of AIDS and other viruses were supposed to result in the end of life. Exaggerated claims from scientists regarding environmental disasters find willing accomplices in the media. Predicted global catastrophes increase TV ad revenue, magazine subscriptions and newspaper circulation, which, in turn, creates wealth for pseudo-scientists. After one group cashes in with the “disaster of the year,” another group surfaces heralding a new global danger.<sup>12</sup>

In the last few decades, many Christians have joined the ranks of the imposters, spreading false alarms and false dates for our Lord’s return. One example is Edgar C. Whisenant’s *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*. His follow-up, *89 Reasons*, was not nearly the financial success of his first book. Harold Kamping is another example. He falsely declared that in 1994 the church would be caught up to heaven. If that was not enough, he came back with the widely publicized claim that May 21, 2011 was *Judgment Day*. The imagined benefits of false predictions must be attractive for men like Kamping to risk a second false claim. We are the real fools if we believe them.

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<sup>12</sup> Within the closing argument of the “World Conference on the Changing Atmosphere” (Toronto, June 1988), we find this ominous prediction: “Humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled and globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war.” The “Greatest Danger to the Survival of All Life” according to this 1988 gathering of “International Doctors and Nurses for Emergency Response to Global Climate Disruption” are/were: (1.) Runaway Greenhouse Effect (2.) Runaway Climate Change and (3) Death of Oceans.

So the question is, "When this coming wave of prophets hits, which one do we know to trust?" Trust the one who consistently sounds as though he or she is speaking directly out of the Bible. There is no better illustration of how a prophet of God will speak than Christ's words to the seven churches of Asia Minor in *Revelation 2* and *3*.

God has sent one to whom we must listen. A careful reading of *Mark 9* tells us who he is. It was on a mountain that the frightened disciples witnessed the *transfiguration*. Jesus' clothing became *dazzling white*. With Christ were two prophets, Moses and Elijah.

*Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"*

*Mark 9:7*

Peter, James and John did listen. They later recalled Jesus' words just as he spoke them. After Pentecost, they taught the Lord's words to his followers, recording them in the Gospels.

Not all of Jesus' words are in red ink in certain Bibles. For argument's sake, let us say that Jesus' words in red are the only ones to which we must pay attention. This is a high standard indeed.

In red letters, we find Jesus testimony concerning his words.

*"As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. **So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.**"*

*John 12:47-50*

If Israel was responsible for what God spoke through Moses, how much more are we for what Jesus says? To the Jews that rejected his teaching, yet acted as though they always obeyed Moses, Christ said,

*"But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"*

*John 5:45-47*

## *The Prophets of God*

If man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God,<sup>13</sup> then, since Moses, who is it that speaks for God? In former times, it was to his servants, the prophets, that the Lord gave his life-giving word.<sup>14</sup> But in these last days, *God has spoken to us by his Son whom he appointed heir of all things.*<sup>15</sup>

When we read that Jesus is “the Word”<sup>16</sup> and, when he comes in his glory bearing the name *the Word of God*,<sup>17</sup> we make the connection. All Scripture is God-breathed.<sup>18</sup> Jesus, the faithful and true prophet of God, has made the future known. We must listen!

### *Every word*

While reading a long list of King David’s officers and officials that made up his kingdom’s leadership team, I paused when I saw this:

*Hushai the Arkite was the king’s friend.*

*1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 27:33b*

What a description! In that brief phrase, I learned a lot about Hushai. Imagine what it took to be David’s friend. Picture the relaxing moments as David sat warming himself by the fire. Who was there to help him enjoy the moment? It was Hushai. Others came and went from the king’s presence but Hushai was a mainstay or a fixture.

David did not have to guard his speech around Hushai for fear his friend would betray a confidence. Their relationship was honest and time-tested. With Hushai, David had the close friend that he needed.

Hushai may have been an alter ego. He knew David’s opinion yet he was free to disagree. As with all others, Hushai was the king’s servant. Yet he was more than a servant, he was David’s intimate friend. Hushai was at the hub of the inner circle of Israel’s great king.

When we listen to Jesus’ words, we hear something reminiscent of King David and Hushai. The Lord said to his disciples,

*“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no*

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<sup>13</sup> *Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4*

<sup>14</sup> *Daniel 9:6, 10, Amos 3:7, Zechariah 1:6*

<sup>15</sup> *Hebrews 1:1-2*

<sup>16</sup> *John 1:1, 14*

<sup>17</sup> *Revelation 19:13*

<sup>18</sup> *2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16*

*longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business. **Instead, I have called you friends** for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you."*

*John 15:13-15*

The word "friends" (above) in the language of the New Testament implies a "close inner-circle friendship." For the servants who obey him, Jesus extends an invitation to come, rest with him and listen.

The upside of an intimate relationship with Jesus is unlimited. Although disciples remain loyal servants, Christ welcomes them to know details of the Father's business, details reserved for the closest of friends. There are no secrets between Jesus and his inner circle.

After Simon Peter's confession of Jesus as *the Christ, the Son of the Living God*,<sup>19</sup> we read,

*From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*

*Matthew 16:21*

After hearing this, Peter took his inner-circle privilege as a license to change Jesus' words. His job was to listen and learn. Instead, Peter rebuked his Master. Jesus then sternly rebuked his servant.

*"Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

*Matthew 16:23*

No one, not even Simon Peter, will change so much as a syllable of prophecy without encountering serious negative consequences.<sup>20</sup> Our task is the same as Peter's—to pass it on exactly, word for word.

Satan is constantly trying to alter God's plan. We must stifle every impulse to make Peter's mistake of *Matthew 16:22*. It was there, in verse 16, that Peter allowed his revelation of Jesus' deity lure him into thinking that he could change prophecy. *"Never, Lord!" he said. "This*

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<sup>19</sup> *Matthew 16:16*

<sup>20</sup> *Matthew 26:73-75*

## *The Prophets of God*

*shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16:23)* Sadly, this grave error is common among Christian teachers today.

When servants or friends receive Jesus' prophetic words, but then add to or subtract from them, they bring terrible judgment on themselves.<sup>21</sup> Whether as servants or inner-circle friends, we are to listen and pass on exactly what we hear from Jesus, without disputing the content, tone or the integrity of the message!

In a manner strikingly similar to Jesus' prophecy in *Matthew 16:21*, where he foretold his persecution, suffering, death and resurrection, the Lord alerts his followers to what awaits them in the last days. His disciples gathered to him on the Mount of Olives and listened attentively as Jesus spoke exactly what the Father gave him to say.

***"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."***

*"For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened... See, I have told you ahead of time."*

*Matthew 24:9-13, 21-22, 25*

In *Matthew 16:21*, Jesus spoke of how he was to suffer. We see, in *Matthew 24:9*, that soon it will be every disciple's turn.

### *So you want to debate*

We have an interruption. Upon hearing Jesus' words from *Matthew 24:9*, one of our great modern-day evangelicals raises an objection:

"Never, Lord! This shall never happen to us! Your Church will be raptured *before* the tribulation, *not after*. I beg your pardon, Master, but this was not a teaching for those secure in their salvation. It is for Israel or the Jews. Before those things you speak

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<sup>21</sup> *Revelation 22:18-19*

of, in *Matthew 24*, come to pass, Christians will be taken up to heaven to receive their reward.”

Hearing this, a well-known theologian and scholar comes to his feet. Wearing his distinctive robes, he clears his throat and, in a professorial tone, begins his customary “eschatological discourse.”

“With due respect to my colleague—and, of course, you, Lord—your followers should not take your words in *Matthew 24* literally. The events you describe have already occurred. Your coming, Lord, is spiritual. It is symbolic of the rapturous love that enters our hearts when we partake in Holy Communion through the sacraments. This teaching has endured through the centuries; since your beloved saint, Augustine, formed the strong foundation of Christian belief that we build on today.”

If these interruptions took place in Jesus’ presence, what would Christ, The Prophet of God, do? Anyone who intimates or says outright the Son of God is lying has a rebuke coming. Just as he did Peter, Jesus would call them “Satan,” “a stumbling block to God’s people. They do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men.”

Jesus’ words are not hard to understand. We must avoid the subtle seduction of this age, thinking we know better than Christ does about what his people must face at the end of this age. We must ignore the words—no matter how well crafted or articulately spoken—of those who attempt to change God’s set laws or alter his decrees. If we listen to them, we will take part in their punishment.

It is the privilege of Jesus’ servants to hear his words and share his prophecy with those eager to listen and follow. For everything that our Lord learned from the Father, he has revealed to his intimate friends.

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*O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."*

*Isaiah 30:19-21*

## Anticipator

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A few years ago, I sat in the comfortable surroundings of a friend's home as he spoke to a small, informal gathering of ministers. That morning, as I engaged in small talk with someone I knew, the question went through my mind, "Why are you here?"

As I settled into my chair, Jim, our host, shared an illustration I had heard previously: "The professional ice hockey player Wayne Gretzky set many records," he said. "Gretzky scored more goals and assists in a season and in his career than anyone that ever played the game. He did it in spite of the fact he wasn't a big man or skate that fast." Jim reminded us that Gretzky's popular nickname was "The Great One."

My friend went on: "After his career ended, Gretzky was often asked for the secret on how he could set so many records." About to make his point, Jim paused, "Gretzky said that a good hockey player skates to where the puck *is* but I skated to where the puck *was going*."

My friend concluded, "Gretzky knew where the puck was going to go and met it. God wants his people to know where he's going."

Bang! A sensation of light ran from my head through my body. A sudden realization exploded in my mind, "Yes, God wants his people to know where he's going so we get there to meet him." Oblivious to my surroundings, I began to scratch out some notes. I made the application that Jim wanted: If I get to where my Lord is going, and I am prepared when I get there, rich opportunity will present itself.

Long before that day, my studies had taken me to *The Book of Revelation* and other Bible prophecy. I had been discovering where God was going and what he was going to do. I sensed it was up to me to anticipate it all; then bring along as many family members and friends as I could get to follow.

### *Understanding*

The experience I had at Jim's house could not have happened without a lot of background study. For instance, I learned long before that day the prophecy contained in Scripture sets the Bible apart from

*The Prophets of God*

other holy books. The Bible is not simply pages of moral precepts; it was full of amazingly accurate predictions. In terms of its precision, nothing compares to the prophecy found in the Word of God.

The prophet Daniel wanted to know where he stood in the big scheme of things. He realized that God was sovereign. He understood the captivity of his people was just punishment for their sin. Instead of bemoaning his misfortune as an exile, Daniel thrived under Babylonian and Persian rule. He followed the directions that God gave through Jeremiah a half century before when he told his people to settle in and be a blessing to the people and the land where he sent them.<sup>1</sup>

After a while, Daniel sought to know God's next move. How did he find out what it was? He read Jeremiah's prophecy. From it, Daniel received understanding; then he acted on it. It is what anticipators do.

For us, the principle is the same. We need to go to the inspired source, just as Daniel did, then take action on what the Lord reveals.

*...in the first year of his [King Darius of Persia] reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.*

*Daniel 9:2-3*

The desire to know what God was going to do with his people drove Daniel, the Lord's servant, into inspired prophecy. The seventy years of captivity was nearly over. Through Jeremiah, God alerted Daniel he was preparing his people, the Jews, to return to Jerusalem.

Is a similar event soon to take place? Is this why God is prompting his servants globally to seek understanding? Is the end so close that God has begun to stir his people to pray and to take action? Is the Spirit raising up prophets who will anticipate their Lord's next move?

*...while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, "**Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as***

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<sup>1</sup> *Jeremiah 29:4-11*

**you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision:**

**“Seventy ‘sevens’<sup>2</sup> are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.”**

*Daniel 9:21-24*

The Lord gave his servant the answer. Daniel humbled himself and prayed. He began to seek God’s face. Afterward, Daniel heard directly from heaven. God was a forgiving God. He was healing their land.<sup>3</sup>

Because the servant Daniel was highly favored by God, the angel, Gabriel, personally delivered him more understanding. The end of Judah’s exile initiated another period of judgment. After they returned to their God-given land, the next phase of their sentence, *seventy ‘sevens’* (seventy weeks of seven years), would begin.

When the *seventy ‘sevens’* were fulfilled, Israel’s transgressions would be paid for; all wickedness would be destroyed and everlasting righteousness would be established. At the end of the *seventy ‘sevens,’* (i.e. the very last day of this age) the Holy One will be anointed as Israel’s king. Jesus will then take his throne.<sup>4</sup>

The prophecy to Daniel was not only for the Jews in his time since it concerned the time of the end. Then to whom was God speaking? Jeremiah’s prophecy regarding the seventy years of captivity was not for himself but for Daniel. The prophecy regarding “the seventy ‘sevens’ of years” was not for Daniel but God’s people living in the last days. They will read *Daniel* and weep over their sins and the sins of their fathers just as he wept and confessed the sin of his ancestors.

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<sup>2</sup> “*Seventy sevens*” in this passage is prophet-speak for 490 years. Seventy times seven or 70 X 7 weeks of years (seven years in one week of years as there are seven days in a week) is helpful in dividing the 490 year total into segments: first, sixty-two sevens (62 X 7 years) then seven sevens, or 49 years, and finally one seven (7 years), the set period for the end of this age. The weeks of years is a Sabbath pattern consistent with Levitical law. Following seven weeks of years, the year of Jubilee is celebrated with slaves being set free and debts being forgiven.

<sup>3</sup> *2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 7:14*

<sup>4</sup> Seventy ‘sevens’ is 70 times seven years. A week of years is seven years.

## *The Prophets of God*

Is it time for the next generation of servants like Daniel to begin their quest. What is God's next move? Is it time to humble ourselves and pray? Is this what it takes for the next generation of favored prophets to receive divine understanding? Perhaps then, God will send his prophets to get us to where he is going.

### *The winning edge*

The Apostle Paul encouraged his beloved disciple Timothy,

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:15*

The edge in winning belongs to person who prepares by studying God's plan and by familiarizing themselves with the enemy. If we heed this counsel and *continue in him* [Christ], a reward is waiting. Our goal is to *be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.*<sup>5</sup>

Great victories belong to leaders that anticipate their opponent's moves and exploit their weaknesses. When American involvement in World War II began, then Lt. General George C. Patton took command of the demoralized U.S. forces in North Africa. In their first engagement with the Germans in late February 1943, the Americans suffered heavy casualties against the vaunted *Afrika Panzer Korps* of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel. Patton recognized his troops were dispirited from their earlier defeat and undisciplined so he took corrective action.

Not long afterward, Patton's army again faced Rommel's tanks and guns at El Guettar. This time the German casualties were so heavy that this battle turned the momentum in North Africa toward the Allies. Patton credited the U.S. victory to his study of the book, *Infantry Attacks*, written by "The Desert Fox" himself, Field Marshall Rommel. "I read your book!" Patton exclaimed as the Nazis retreated.

Another quote from General Patton, an incredibly successful leader and anticipator, revealed his philosophy:

"Prepare for the unknown by studying how others in the past have coped with the unforeseeable and unpredictable."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *1<sup>st</sup> John 2:28*

<sup>6</sup> From [www.brainyquotes.com](http://www.brainyquotes.com), George Patton

Successful athletic coaches follow a similar line of thinking. With the big game on the line, they study video of their opponents in order to prepare. Soon they will face them. Each coaching staff studies the other team until they know them better than they know themselves.

Studying the strength, weakness and tendencies of the competition provides an edge for anticipators. If we apply ourselves to studying prophecy and to knowing the devil's schemes, the edge is ours.

### *The 10-80-10 Theory*

In the book by Ben Sherwood, *The Survivor's Club*, he explained how researchers came up with a formula that gives some clarity to the prophet's role. In *The Survivor's Club*, we find *the 10-80-10 theory*.

According to studies, *the 10-80-10 theory* explains people's basic reactions in a crisis. Ten percent are leadership material: they develop a plan, take action and make good decisions. Eighty percent are bewildered. They act as if they are confused. They wait for someone to tell them what to do.<sup>7</sup> In *The Survivor's Club*, Sherwood's description of the eighty percent is the most pronounced. When disaster strikes, they become "frozen statues." As noted in several reports, in extreme emergencies, eighty per cent seem unable to move toward safety.

The last ten percent, it seems, fail to make it even though survival was attainable. For them, the easy becomes difficult. The moderate challenge becomes insurmountable. Ten percent doom themselves.

Since prophecy is God's means of leading his people to safety during a predicted, pre-ordained crisis, *the 10-80-10 theory* deserves our attention. Following this formula, I see the danger to eighty to ninety percent of Christians in the last days. They are unprepared to survive. They are hoping to get instructions when the disaster comes.

The problem with the "wait for instructions approach" is that those who wait will be of no help to themselves or others. Jesus wants us to prepare so we can aid others. He warned that there would be false Christs and prophets performing miracles. Using signs, they will lure the unwary into believing their false claims.<sup>8</sup> Many will be shouting directions during the coming storm. False prophets will offer cleverly crafted lies that are straight from the devil. How will we know them?

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<sup>7</sup> From the transcript of Ben Sherwood's radio interview on the Glenn Beck Show, January 29, 2009, hour one.

<sup>8</sup> *Matthew 24:23-26*

## *The Prophets of God*

Ten percent will foolishly do what God specifically warns not to do. They will justify taking the beast's mark. Though they will believe they are following Jesus, they will ignore his warnings found in Scripture.

Using *the 10-80-10 theory*, I liken the first 10 in the theory to the servants or people of God. They prepare for crisis in advance. They know how to do the right thing. A few of the majority will find their way but only if they follow the minority who will be listening to God.

### *Set up to lose*

Traditional methods of teaching prophecy are creating many frozen statue Christians. From my perspective, the outlook for eighty percent surviving to the end is not that good. Wolves in sheep's clothing will prey on our vulnerability. The problem is this: We have developed a type of mental paralysis. Most are learning *what* to think from their trusted teachers rather than *how* to think objectively from the Bible.

We are being set up to lose. For now, Christians are fine with their dependency on so-called experts. Yet what will they do during the coming crisis when they must think for themselves? Lacking knowhow in this department could well be the greatest tragedy of all.

If, for purpose of discussion, ten percent have an awareness of what to do in the midst of the coming global disaster, where do people like Daniel factor in? As I see it, they will be instructing the ten per cent that will do the right thing. Those like Daniel will show leaders from prophecy what to expect and how to survive it. What makes the ten per cent leadership material? They listen intently to the Bible's prophets.

I find the following unreferenced statement helpful in explaining more about the *10-80-10 theory*. It is attributed to Heraclitus, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. philosopher.

"Out of every one hundred men, ten shouldn't even be there, eighty are just targets, nine are the real fighters, and we are lucky to have them, for they make the battle. Ah, but the one, one is a warrior, and he will bring the others back."

Keep Heraclitus' description of "the one" in mind. His battlefield analogy is particularly apt if we are to have any hope of living into the age to come. War is a long-term crisis. Nine percent will listen to the prophets. We are lucky to have them. However, prophets are the warriors, providing clarity of mind and purpose in the midst of chaos.

They will bring the others back. They are rare: not one in ten, but one in one hundred of those who call themselves saints.

### *Signs of the times*

Thick fog enveloped the country road that I routinely traveled. It had been a late night at work, so darkness compounded my difficulty driving. Meandering over a plateau, I gripped the steering wheel tight. I was only capable of seeing a few feet ahead.

The poor visibility continued for miles. My vehicle crept along slowly, while I began to fall into something like a trance. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I glimpsed a sign. It took a moment but I recognized that a stop sign had passed to my right. It occurred to me that the only stop is where the road ends. "Oh-no," I thought. "Right or left are the choices but my momentum is taking me straight ahead." I could only try to stop, hold on and hope for the best. After a muddy bumpy ride through a cut cornfield, I was back on the road heading out of the fog for home.

I share this example of God's mercy and protection to illustrate the importance of signs. Had I not identified the stop sign, the outcome would have been much worse. The sign could not keep me from going into the field but seeing it saved me from crashing into the trees.

One day Jesus had a talk with his disciples. He knew that when he ascended to heaven to be with the Father they would be remaining here without their Master and Teacher. The next generation of believer would only know those who followed Jesus, not the Lord himself. Since they were leaders, Jesus' apostles had to teach his words clearly.

Previously, these same disciples had asked Jesus for the sign of his coming and the end of the age. His detailed, sign-by-sign answer has an importance too great to measure.<sup>9</sup> We see this prophecy in *Matthew 24*, *Mark 13* and *Luke 21*. Because of this section of the Word of God, Jesus' followers need never be misled or misdirected.<sup>10</sup> Disciples were to know the signs Jesus gave them and then teach them to future generations of faithful disciples.

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<sup>9</sup> This prophecy of Jesus is often referred to as "the Olivet Discourse" since the place where it was spoken to his disciples was the Mount of Olives.

<sup>10</sup> *Matthew 24:25*

*The Prophets of God*

In the context of signs, Jesus refers to a fig tree.

*“Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.”*

*Luke 21:29-31*

For nearly two thousand years, no signs were visible in the Holy Land. Then something happened. A sign appeared. Jews began to return to the land God promised Abram’s descendants. It is an unmistakable sign of Christ’s soon return. A sovereign nation made up of the people of Judah re-emerged after two thousand plus years.

Why is a Jewish nation with Jerusalem as its capital a sign that Christ’s return is not far away? Look at one major end-time event (sign), testified to by the angel Gabriel.

*“He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven,’ In the middle of the ‘seven,’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”*

*Daniel 9:27*

The above prophecy given to Daniel pertains to the Jews. Jesus affirmed this prophetic sign found in *Daniel 9*. It points to a rebuilt temple and a reinstated sacrificial system during the time of the end.

***“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains... Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.”***

*Matthew 24:15-16, 20-21*

In picturing the cataclysmic events the world will soon face, note where one of them will happen. According to *Daniel 10* and Jesus’ prophecy in *Matthew 24*, “the desolation” will be upon the altar of God in the rebuilt “Most Holy Place” on the temple mount in Jerusalem.

When the temple is finished, all will be ready for the antichrist to make his entrance. He will then desecrate the altar and proclaim himself as “god”—but not until the midpoint of the last seven years.

We may think that a Jewish temple on the third most holy site in all of Islam is impossible. With the present political and religious tensions in the Middle East between Muslims and Jews, how realistic is an altar, manned by a Levitical priesthood, on the temple mount?

Is anything too hard for God? How much more impossible was it prior to 1968 when the new state of Israel did not control all of Jerusalem. Tel Aviv was the Israeli capital. How much more impossible was it before May 1948 when the sovereign state of Israel did not exist? How impossible was it prior to the start of the Zionist movement when few, if any, Jews resided in their ancient homeland?

Unfortunately, in our discussions on prophecy, secular history or current events may adversely affect our interpretation of Scripture. Brilliant scholars present their views of the end times based on a geopolitical landscape that has radically changed since World War II. The prophetic fig tree has budded—figuratively speaking—yet many of our leading Christian scholars refuse to acknowledge the sign.

### *Anticipators*

Anyone, no matter their age, intelligence or background, can become a very important person to their family, community or sphere of influence. Regardless our past mistakes or sins, if we can accurately declare what is coming, we will help many to thrive and survive the dark days ahead.

Who knows the future? God does! The good news is that he does not keep such things to himself. The Lord has always shared knowledge of what is coming with his special spokespersons.

*Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing  
without revealing his plan  
to his servants the prophets.*

*Amos 3:7*

To be one of the servants that know the sovereign plan of God is a great privilege. To be the man or woman that gives divine instructions, passing on the Father’s unaltered words to the saints, is a high calling indeed. Who will be able to stand in those shoes?

## *The Prophets of God*

In the world of business, great rewards come to perceptive individuals who accurately predict future markets or trends in sales. Knowing when to go forward with something new or hold back, when to expand production and workforce or cutback on inventory, are decisions with major financial consequence. Decision makers who bring about growth and profit for their company are valuable resources. Venture capitalists are always looking to invest in bright, innovative minds that have a product or service ready to enter the marketplace.

Very much like prophets, anticipators do not spring from the earth like weeds; they are specially nurtured and cultivated hybrid orchids. They are rare blossoms that come and go quickly.

Anticipators have always been highly valued additions to a monarch's court. Since men first went to war, they have sought the counsel of oracles and seers. Anticipators may use their ability to serve anyone. Prophets serve only God.

As I write, Bobby Knight lost the record for most wins among U.S. college basketball coaches. Among Knight's outstanding coaching talents was his ability to recruit quality players. American basketball TV analyst Dick Vitale revealed this winning coach's secret: "He didn't look for players who were reactors. He wanted anticipators."

### *Knowing*

It is important to differentiate between anticipating and guessing. With guessing, there is an element of doubt. Gamblers are guessers. They weigh the odds, rub a charm for good luck and then place their bets. They may have a hunch but they cannot know for sure. Sometimes gamblers are correct and win but mostly they lose.

In describing anticipators, doubt is not in the equation. There is no guesswork. It is as if anticipators have the gift of knowing.

God's servants, the prophets, anticipate because the Lord has announced what he is going to do. The relationship between the prophet and their Lord is one of intimacy.

If you or I become intimate with the Sovereign Lord, then we, too, will know what he wants to pass on about the future. Then we, also, will be one of God's sought-after anticipators.

It was a midsummer afternoon when, as a married man in my late twenties, I sat on the front row of the huge stadium's top deck. Around

me was what had been a busload of teens from our church youth group. I had always loved the game of baseball. As a boy and even as I grew into manhood, I went to each game with my ball glove, a sign of my quest for a souvenir major-league baseball.

That warm Saturday in August, my passion was youth ministry, not baseball. I had forgotten my glove. Halfway through the game, my mind drifted as I stared down onto the field. Do not be alarmed by what I am about to describe, but I was given a vision. In it, I extended my hands and received a baseball as one might accept a gift from a friend.

A moment later, as if watching instant replay, I stood and put out my hands, waist-high, in front of me. I slid my palms under a baseball suspended like a feather, motionless in the air. (Incidentally, the ball was off the bat of the National League's batting champion of that year.)

Unaware of the cheers coming from those around me, I held a real major-league baseball in my hands. Then, I heard a voice whisper: *Delight in me and I'll give you the desire of your heart. (cf. Psalm 37:4)*

Plucking the baseball from the sky, like it was a delicious, ripe apple on a tree, was one of my first experiences with God's intimate nature. As a young man, he planted in my heart a seed of desire for a baseball. That summer afternoon he fulfilled it.

Knowing the good that is soon coming from our Sovereign Lord's hand is his gift to those who delight in him. God wants them to understand where he is going so they can bring as many with them as possible. He wants to give his servants insights and revelations so they can arrive at their destiny point prepared to meet him. Jesus wants his people to anticipate what he has promised, not only for his prophets but for all who long for his appearing.

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*“Again and again I sent my servants the prophets, who said, ‘Do not do this detestable thing that I hate!’ “*

*Jeremiah 44:4*

## Three Men & Their God

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God gave me a precious gift, not once or twice but several times. He gave me many best friends—three in particular. During different periods of my life, Al and I, Rick and I or Alex and I were inseparable. We laughed together, played together and endured tough times together. It pains me to think that all three are gone.

As close as we were, life separated us. Graduation, work, marriage, moving the family took us in opposite directions. Through one of his relatives, I received word of Rick's cancer. His terminal disease briefly reunited us after dozens of years. For both Al and Alex, news of their passing came to me long after the fact. It is still hard to accept that my best friends seemed to vanish. I long for the day that—as the song goes—friends are friends forever.

### *Favorites*

Foreshadowed in the Bible, from *Genesis* to *Malachi*, are signs regarding the coming of Christ the Messiah and his future ministry. What we often overlook in these prophecies are the Old Testament appearances of Christ in bodily form. If we were to ask members of certain religious groups if God ever appeared on earth in human flesh, their answer would be an emphatic “No!” Many who claim they are Christians by faith yet deny Christ the Son's full equality with God the Father, would give the same negative response.

Groups such as Muslims, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses must deny that Christ is God or else be compelled to worship him as Lord of lords. Proof for Jesus' equality with God and his *eternality* (a word meaning that Christ always was and will forever be) is in our Bible.

The Son of God shows himself in Scripture thousands of years before his birth in Bethlehem. Granted, Jesus' name does not appear in bright lights, still the evidence is beyond a reasonable doubt. In the examples we will look at, Jesus appears to those who were already intimates of God, each needing in on his plan.

### *Abraham*

We go first to Abraham, the man that God called his friend.<sup>1</sup>

***The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.***

*Genesis 18:1-2*

In *Genesis 18:8*, we see *the LORD* drinking water and milk. He (Jehovah) is also eating curds and meat from a choice calf. The LORD and his accompanying angelic witnesses receive Abraham's hospitality and his fellowship. The visitors have come from heaven to see this highly favored man for a reason: They announce (prophesy) the birth of a son to Abraham and Sarah. When the barren, ninety-year old Sarah hears of it, she laughs.<sup>2</sup>

Other than seeing the word "LORD" in this passage, is there anything familiar about the main visitor sitting in Abraham's presence? Do you notice anything in his demeanor or his rhetorical question "*Is anything too hard for God?*" Does it sound like Jesus as he spoke to his disciples, "*...with God all things are possible.*" (*Matthew 19:26*)?

Announcing the birth of Abraham's son was not the only plan the LORD came to share with his friend. He seemed to wrestle with what he should do next before deciding to let his favored, trusted and chosen servant in on his plans.

***Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."***

*Genesis 18:20-21*

"*As bad as the outcry that has reached me*" reveals why the three came down from heaven. Cries for justice reached divine ears seated on the throne of God. Abraham received an invitation into God's inner circle. He sat on the council, not as a servant, but as a trusted friend.

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<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah 41:8*

<sup>2</sup> *Genesis 18:13-15*

### *Three Men & Their God*

The LORD told Abraham his plan regarding Sodom and Gomorrah. After, Abraham began to intercede on behalf of his nephew and family living in the midst of Sodom's wickedness.

In the LORD'S presence, Abraham spoke humbly yet confidently. He began negotiating with *the Judge of all the earth* by saying,

*“Far be it from **you** to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. **Far be it from you!** Will not **the Judge** of all the earth do right?”*

*Genesis 18:25*

Familiarity with his character is a trait that draws the LORD closer to his servants. Abraham knows to whom he is talking and how to voice his objection. This is one reason why God loved Abraham. Unlike Peter, who tried to prevent Jesus from going to the cross,<sup>3</sup> Abraham never spoke out of place or sought to prevent judgment. Abraham agreed that Sodom and Gomorrah deserved punishment. God's friend made his appeal based on mercy for the righteous, not justice.

Future intercessors will be wise to follow Abraham's example.

### *Joshua*

In *Joshua 3*, God parted the waters of the Jordan River. The Israelites crossed through the river, stepping, for the first time, onto the land God promised Abraham's offspring. Without wavering, Joshua did what God commanded. As the men of Israel approached their first battle inside Canaan, Joshua encountered a mysterious stranger.

*Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”*

*“Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?”*

*The commander of the LORD's army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.*

*Joshua 5:13-15*

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<sup>3</sup> *Matthew 16:22*

*The Prophets of God*

Do you think that the man who appeared to Joshua is Christ, Immanuel,<sup>4</sup> a name that means “God with us?” First, look at the similarity in the wording in *Genesis 18:2* as one clue (“*Abraham looked up and saw...*”) and *Joshua 5:13* (“*Now when Joshua... he looked up and saw...*”). Such details are not conclusive by themselves but they do constitute pieces of evidence. This wording is not incidental.

Secondly, when Joshua asked whether he was for them (with them) or for their enemy, the commander replied, “*Neither.*” The response may be a bit confusing until we read Peter’s revelation in *Acts 10* about how God feels toward Jews and Gentiles alike,

*“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”*

*Acts 10:34-35*

Is this not what we would expect God’s Son to say? Did he accept a Samaritan woman with a sinful past, as well as a Jewish tax collector found in a tree? Has he not always shown love and acceptance for people everywhere who fear him? The stranger before Joshua was not fighting for Israel’s glory. What he was about to do, he did for his glory.

Thirdly, we read, “*As commander of the army of the LORD, I have now come.*” Who commands the heavenly hosts? His name is Jesus! We know of his role as commander of the Lord’s army from his testimony before his accusers in John’s Gospel.

When questioned by Pilate about whether he was the king of the Jews, Christ did not deny it nor did he leave his identity a mystery.

*Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”*

*“You are a king, then!” said Pilate.*

*Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”*

*John 18:36-37*

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<sup>4</sup> *Isaiah 7:14*

*Three Men & Their God*

In these words of Jesus, we find a principle we dare not forget. It is not about having God on our side. The critical question is, "Are we on his side?" Everyone on the Lord's side must be on the side of truth.

At his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told his disciples to put their swords away. They were not to fight a battle of resistance. Instead, Christ told them,

*"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once **put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?** But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"*

*Matthew 26:53-54*

How many were in a Roman legion? A legion was comprised of a thousand armed men. Jesus was informing his disciples that it would be nothing for the Father to give him command over twelve thousand angelic warriors. The number would be more than sufficient to slay all of Christ's enemies. The commander of the Lord's army had, at his bidding, more angels than necessary. Twelve legions would suffice.

What more evidence do we need to prove that the stranger in front of Joshua was our Lord, King Jesus? Yet, there is more: the Bible shows us the commander of the army of the Lord leading not twelve legions, but twelve times twelve legions into the final battle of this age.

John seemed to look up, as Abraham and Joshua had. He wrote,

*I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war... **The armies of heaven were following him**, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:*

*KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS*

*Revelation 19:11, 14-16*

There is a purpose for the army of the Lord. Christ commands both heavenly angels and earthly saints. No angel bears the title "King and Lord of Heaven and Earth." The man standing before Joshua was not merely an angel. Let us look at the *Joshua 5* passage once more.

## *The Prophets of God*

When Joshua heard all this, he fell to the ground. Angels do not permit saints to worship. Only God is worthy of worship. Angels are *ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.*<sup>5</sup>

What happened twice when John tried to worship an angel?

*Then the angel said to me, "Write:..."*

*At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!"*

*Revelation 19:9a, 10a (cf. 22:8-9)*

Satan, a fallen angel, offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world if he would bow and worship. The Lord reminded him of the hostility that led to Satan's sudden expulsion, as an angel, from heaven.

*Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"*

*Matthew 4:10, Luke 4:8 (Deuteronomy 6:13)*

The worship of men and of angels belongs exclusively to God. The angels that did not fall with Satan<sup>6</sup> understand that principle well.

### *Holy ground*

What happened next should remove any remaining doubt the commander before Joshua was Christ. While Joshua lay on the ground in worship, he heard the command, *"Take off your sandals for the ground you are standing on is holy."* (Joshua 5:15)

Where did we hear those words before, and who spoke them? The words came to Joshua's mentor, Moses, many years before this.

*When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses, Moses!"*

*And Moses said, "Here I am."*

*"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

*Exodus 3:4-6*

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<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 1:14

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 12:7-9

Moses hid his face for the same reason that Joshua fell prostrate on the ground. Moses knew that he was in God's presence. Regaining his composure, Moses asked the LORD what name he went by so if the Hebrew elders asked he could tell them. Out of the burning bush, God said tell the Hebrew people that *I AM has sent me to you.*<sup>7</sup>

To know who spoke to Moses and who was speaking to Joshua, we first have to make some important connections. The holy ground before Joshua and, similarly, at the burning bush, is one link. The name "*I AM*" (Hebrew- "Yahweh"), spoken to Moses, is another.

Jesus' declared to the Jews this about his identity:

*"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.*

*John 8:58-59*

According to Jewish law, the punishment for blasphemy (i.e. making oneself equal to God) was death, usually by stoning. This incident on temple grounds was not the first where Jesus gave testimony of his equality with God.<sup>8</sup> It was not the last either.<sup>9</sup> The presence of Jesus, the "I AM," should have prompted the Jewish leaders to fall on their face in worship. The Pharisees among the Jews picked up stones to kill Jesus, instead.

Consider the men we have mentioned: Abraham and Joshua. Among God's servants, their names are highly revered. Sin never entered the Biblical record next to Joshua's name. He was blameless like his namesake (Joshua=Hoshea=Yeshua=Jesus).

### *Prelude to destruction*

Before we leave Joshua, we need to relate this again to prophecy. The LORD's Old Testament appearances always had great prophetic significance. Christ gave Joshua specific details of how he, not the Israelites, would destroy the great walled city of Jericho. The LORD would bring the city's walls crashing inward on its inhabitants. All the gold, silver, precious stones and fine clothing inside, therefore, were to

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<sup>7</sup> *Exodus 3:13-14*

<sup>8</sup> *John 5:17-18*

<sup>9</sup> *Luke 22:66-71, Matthew 26:63-68*

## *The Prophets of God*

be devoted to him.<sup>10</sup> The battle belonged to the commander of the LORD's army; therefore, so did the spoils. The victory belonged to God's chosen people. It will be just like this at the end.

Sodom and Gomorrah were in our first example. In a single day, God destroyed these cities with fire and sulfur. In *Joshua 5*, God declared his judgment on Jericho. Its collapse came suddenly after the Israelites walked around in a solemn procession, seven times.

The prophetic relationship between Sodom's ruinous end (Abraham) and Jericho's collapse (Joshua) needs emphasized. The two cities of Sodom and Jericho historically represent a future city described in *Revelation 18* as Babylon the Great. The LORD's appearances in the Old Testament direct us forward to Babylon the Great, a city more evil than Sodom and more corrupt than Jericho.

John received a warning similar to the one that Christ gave to Abraham and Joshua:

*Then I heard another voice from heaven say:*

*“Come out of her, my people,  
so that you will not share in her sins,  
so that you will not receive any of her plagues...*

*Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her:  
death, mourning and famine.*

*She will be consumed by fire,  
for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”*

*Revelation 18:4, 8*

## *Daniel*

For my last of three examples of Christ, the Son of God, in the Old Testament, we turn to *Daniel 10*. Christ's appearances in *Daniel* are more complex yet no less convincing. There is Nebuchadnezzar's observation of one *like a son of the gods*<sup>11</sup> in the fiery furnace and the angel in a vision (i.e. Gabriel, 8:16). Later, in *Daniel 10*, we see a reference to a delay caused by a three-week struggle between the archangel Michael and *the prince of Persia*.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Joshua 6:18-19*

<sup>11</sup> *Daniel 3:24-26*

<sup>12</sup> *Daniel 10:13, 20*

*Three Men & Their God*

What do we know? Daniel had been mourning over Judah's sin during the same twenty-one period. At the end of these three weeks, he stood along the banks of the Tigris River in Babylon. He wrote,

***I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, and his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.***

*Daniel 10:5-6*

Again, we see *I looked up*. This is a clue, not a coincidence.

Compare the description of the man that Daniel saw with the image of the glorified Christ in *Revelation 1*.

***...and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ...His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.***

*Revelation 1:13-15, 16b*

Where I come from, we have an expression: If it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck and quacks like a duck, it must be a duck. If we refer to John's vision in *Revelation 1*, how can we deny that the man dressed in linen and standing before Daniel was Jesus Christ?

Need more? Read Christ's message to one of the seven churches of Asia Minor and compare it with the description in *Daniel 10:6*:

***"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:***

***These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.***

*Revelation 2:18*

Closer examination in light of an event in *The Book of Acts* should add credibility to the idea that Daniel was in Jesus' presence.

***I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves.***

*Daniel 10:7*

## *The Prophets of God*

Compare Daniel's friends (above) with Saul's friends (below) when he became blind from the light from heaven on the Damascus road:

**He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"**

**"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.**

**"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied...**

**The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.**

*Acts 9:4-5, 7*

Daniel and Saul's vision had a similar effect on their companions. Their friends were overwhelmed with fear. They heard something but could not make the words. The voice Saul heard belonged to Jesus seated at the Father's right hand. The words were for Saul alone. Might we then say the man in Daniel's vision was Christ?

Daniel lay prostrate, his face to the ground, like Saul and Joshua did.<sup>13</sup> A hand touched Daniel and brought him to his knees,

**"Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you... Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them... Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong."**

*Daniel 10:11a, 12, 19*

With the exception of the king, no one in the kingdoms of Babylon or Persia had the respect that Daniel had. But these words were not the accolades of men. It was the LORD informing Daniel that he held him in high esteem (highly favored).

How did Daniel acquire favor with God? The same way other servants did: He earned it by being the LORD's friend.

### ***Last friend standing***

To know Jesus as the First and the Last, we must gather our facts and then make our deductions. If we were investigators, we would let the preponderance of evidence not our preconceived ideas determine

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<sup>13</sup> *Daniel 10:9*

our conclusions. We do not need an “I am Jesus” confession in *Genesis*, *Joshua* or *Daniel* to know the mysterious stranger’s identity or to reveal his motive. Each time Christ came to save his servants while revealing his plans to destroy the arrogant and wicked.

For sixty years, John traveled around teaching all who would listen about Jesus.<sup>14</sup> As an apostle, he lived out his last days as an exile.

John had survived many persecutions. The first was fifty years earlier when Jews killed his brother James.<sup>15</sup> One-by-one his fellow disciples died martyr’s deaths. John knew many who came to a violent end because of their faith. In 93 A.D., John was the last of the original twelve still breathing. Could it be that God had John remain alive so Jesus could visit his intimate friend on the rocky Isle of Patmos?<sup>16</sup>

John knew Jesus as no other man alive at that time could. He was *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, the one who, at the cross, Jesus entrusted with his mother.<sup>17</sup> He, with Peter and his brother, James, were at the center of Jesus’ inner circle. There should be no mystery as to why Christ entrusted John with the task of recording the rest of what he heard from the Father. In his Gospel, John remembered Jesus’ exact words:

*“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*

*John 15:15*

In *Revelation*, Jesus, the *one mediator between God and man*,<sup>18</sup> is the source for all Bible prophecy. In this letter, Christ reveals the link between God’s sovereign plan for the last days and his servants.

*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place... that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

*Revelation 1:1a, 2b*

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<sup>14</sup> *John 21:24-25*

<sup>15</sup> *Acts 12:1-2*

<sup>16</sup> *John 21:20-23*

<sup>17</sup> *John 19:25-27*

<sup>18</sup> *1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:5*

## *The Prophets of God*

This is how prophecy comes to us. God told Moses he would give him his words and then he would continue to give them to the prophet who succeeded him from among his brother Israelites.<sup>19</sup> The prophet, in turn, passed on the message that he received directly from the LORD, or from the Father, without any alteration or change. He gave his message to trusted friends like John, the writer of *Revelation*, who recorded it and then shared it in a letter with his trusted friends.

*He [Jesus Christ] made it known by sending his angel to his servant John.*

*Revelation 1:1b*

Everyone claiming to follow Christ are accountable for what the Bible says. God blesses all who read, listen and take to heart the words of prophecy.<sup>20</sup> Those who add to or take away from them will suffer God's curses and plagues.<sup>21</sup> We may err in some things and find it excusable but attributing false prophecy to God is not one of them.

In *Revelation*, each word, along with the tone, comes to us from Jesus Christ or his angel. John is a go-between. His instructions were:

*“Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches...”*

*“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.”*

*Revelation 1:11, 19*

*Write* was exactly what John, Jesus' beloved disciple, did. All other prophets did the same. They wrote the words that God breathed from his mouth.<sup>22</sup> This detail may explain the frequent use in *Revelation* of imagery and themes—even precise wording—found scattered throughout the rest of the Bible.<sup>23</sup> The LORD spoke it all so the language, words and style are the same.

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<sup>19</sup> *Deuteronomy 18:15-18*

<sup>20</sup> *Revelation 1:3*

<sup>21</sup> *Revelation 22:18-19*

<sup>22</sup> *2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16*

<sup>23</sup> Examples include: *Ezekiel 3:1-4/Rev. 10:8-11, Jeremiah 43:11, Daniel 11:33/ Rev. 13:10, Jer. 51:6-8/Rev. 18:1-10, Isaiah 2:9-11/Rev. 6:15-17*

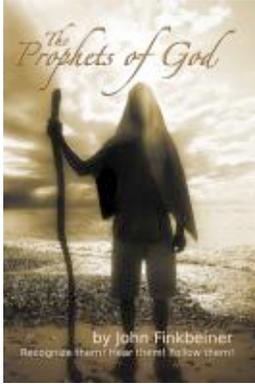
*Three Men & Their God*

When the scroll containing *The Book of Revelation* went off to the seven churches in Asia Minor, the Master's business was complete. His loyal servants or friends would have all they needed in written form. After this, present and future intimate friends would have insight about God's plans for the end of this age and beyond. Jesus entrusted his final prophecy to his beloved friend John, the last apostle that stood as a man, on the earth alive.

\*

*This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." I already gave you a warning when I was with you a second time. I now repeat it while absent; On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me, He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:1-3*



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