

*A fresh, insightful and hope-filled look at prophecy's keys*

# **The People of God**

**Finding the Future in Your Bible**

**26 Keys That Unlock Prophecy**

by John Finkbeiner

Order the complete book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](http://Booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/4816.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.



*The People of God*  
Finding the Future in Your Bible

by John Finkbeiner

**26 Keys** That Unlock Prophecy

*The People of God:  
Finding the Future in Your Bible  
26 Keys that Unlock Bible Prophecy*

Copyright © John F. Finkbeiner, 2010, Second Edition (Revised),  
2010, Third Edition (Revised) January 2019

ISBN 978-1-60910-229-6

All rights reserved. No part of this manuscript may be reproduced in any format or by any electronic or mechanical means without written permission from the author and/or publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Printed on acid-free paper.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV), Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

New King James Version (NKJV), Copyright © 1984 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. The Holy Bible, New King James Version © 1982 New King James Version, New Testament and New Testament with Psalms © 1980, 1979 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

**Unless otherwise indicated, all bold type scripture is the author's emphasis. All rights reserved.**

To contact the author of *The People of God*, write:

% the eirene group  
P.O. Box 694  
Mercer, PA 16137

For informative articles and posts: [www.theprophetsofgod.com](http://www.theprophetsofgod.com)

Cover graphics by Brad McKoy, *Buzzlifters*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART ONE - Out of Egypt .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Key #1 <i>Attention!</i> .....	7
Key #2 <i>The Plan</i> .....	19
Key #3 <i>Gazillions!</i> .....	27
Key #4 <i>Good-guys vs. Bad-guys</i> .....	37
Key #5 <i>Land</i> .....	47
Key #6 <i>People</i> .....	59
Key #7 <i>The Desert Road</i> .....	71
Key #8 <i>Winnowing</i> .....	81
Key #9 <i>Cheap Sex</i> .....	91
Key #10 <i>The Lie</i> .....	101
Key #11 <i>Gold n' Stuff</i> .....	111
Key #12 <i>Unity</i> .....	121
Key #13 <i>Not My People</i> .....	131
<b>PART TWO - Out of Tribulation .....</b>	<b>143</b>
Key #14 <i>Seeds</i> .....	145
Key #15 <i>Twins</i> .....	155
Key #16 <i>Mothers</i> .....	165
Key #17 <i>Names</i> .....	175
Key #18 <i>Saints</i> .....	185
Key #19 <i>The Wicked</i> .....	195
Key #20 <i>The Wise</i> .....	205
Key #21 <i>Two Cups</i> .....	215
Key #22 <i>Gathered Up</i> .....	225
Key #23 <i>The Nations</i> .....	235
Key #24 <i>The Church</i> .....	245
Key #25 <i>The 144,000</i> .....	255
Key #26 <i>Servants</i> .....	265

<b><i>Epilogue</i></b> .....	<b>275</b>
<b>26 Suggested Ways to Prepare for Hard Times</b> .....	<b>279</b>
<b>Special Thanks</b> .....	<b>281</b>

## Key #1 *Attention!*

\*

Standing as erect as possible, I faced my drill sergeant. I was close enough to feel his angry stare. Why did my knees shake? I must have sensed what was coming. I was about to be humbled. My self-centered existence was about to crumble. Duty called; less than six months after college graduation, I answered. It was 1969 and I had the haircut and wore the uniform of a U.S. Army trainee. Drill Sergeant Butler had my full attention.

### *Something is stirring*

It was Sergeant Butler's job to transform soft civilians into battle-ready soldiers. Half a world away a war was going on. The fear-inducing man with the round-brimmed hat was commissioned to prepare us to perform our mission then come back home to marching bands, cheering, flag-waving crowds, and a proud family.

This book has a similar purpose. God's desire is to welcome us into our heavenly home with marching bands and a proud family of saints to greet us. Fear helps to get our attention, so we do not do the foolish thing that gets us killed (*Exodus 20:18-20*). Our part is to learn to think and act like soldiers.

Something is happening. Uneasiness is creeping into our hearts. Alarming stories find the ears of anxious listeners. Instead of hope, dread dominates many conversations. Our world is about to turn upside down. What we are witnessing is the end of this age.

Think of how it was for generations of European Jews. In the decades leading up to World War II, they lived with the under-the-surface anti-Semitism, but suddenly hate boiled over in a way earth had never seen. In November 1938, "The Night of Broken Glass," a major negative event occurred. Adolph Hitler directed retaliation against the Jews for the assassination of a German diplomat. In all, 91 were murdered, another 25 to 30,000 were arrested and placed in camps. The destruction of Jewish property and businesses was extensive, and 267 synagogues were set ablaze. It was a sign many, including Jews, chose to ignore. (Source *Wikipedia*)

Noting the absence of an international uproar on the Jew's behalf or of Western countries opening doors for Jewish refugees, Hitler had

the go-ahead he wanted. He had long blamed Jews for much of Germany's troubles, but then his speeches left no doubt about his plan. Considering the size of the Jewish population, construction went into high gear at Buchenwald, Ravensbruck, Auschwitz and many others.

A "Final Solution to the Jewish Question," or death camps, were prepared for implementation. Had Jews known, would they have stayed within reach of the Nazi's tentacles? The time to leave Europe was in the late 30's. By the 40's, exit doors were likely closed. When it's time to go, it's time to go!

Recalling the fate of World War II-era Jews, prayers of "Lord, save us from our enemies!" are being heard in heaven from within Nigeria, Laos, parts of India, China, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, across North Africa and the Arab world.

Pleas span the globe and they come from Christians who honor Jesus as Savior and Lord. They come from saints who have nowhere to hide and who receive no government protection.

Far removed from real persecution, Western Christians tend to ignore the plight of others, yet they are one major negative event from joining them. As religious freedoms erode and hate for Jews and Christians lies under the surface, believers worry about their children. It may be time to leave, but there is no safe place to go.

### *Grounds for optimism*

The difference between this generation and pre-World War II Europe is the Jew had little warning. After the Nazi's holocaust, the nation Israel was reborn. Since we have a repeated pattern from history and warnings from prophecy, God's people should know what is next. We are living in days foretold long ago.

Instead of surrendering to fear and despair, Christians have a short time to act. The dire news belongs to the wicked, not those who trust in Christ. We, however, must be ready to have our faith tested.

We should be grateful that our children and grandchildren will not live to be old in a godless culture. All standing firm to the end will be saved, but it will take thinking like soldiers. We are poorly informed civilians, because we do not study the prophets. Prophecy is written so we do not simply survive but thrive. Why needlessly die? Our attention is necessary. The truth of God's Word is our salvation.

*But now the bad news*

Suffering presents a huge challenge. Except for those in an information bubble, it is well-known that saints are presently enduring persecution around the globe. Jesus warned that before his return there would be unequalled distress (*Matthew 24:21-22, Luke 21:23*).

As to a future of testings and trials, why do many Christians believe they will escape hardships others have had to overcome? Will we avoid “Satan’s wrath” while many are patiently enduring it? It is written: God will grant authority to Satan’s ruler who will rage, yet only for a set time (*Daniel 7:21, 8:23-26 and 11:33-36*). Decreed in prophecy is the saint’s participation in the hardship. To reign with Christ, we must suffer with Him (*2 Timothy 2:12*).

If we know the purpose in our trials, we will be able to endure them. Do not think it strange if you suffer (*1 Peter 4:12-16*). If we look beyond temporary pain—as Jesus did—and see the reward, we will over-come with patience and hope.

Pity those unprepared for a “*time of great distress.*” It will be like waking from a bad dream and finding it is no dream at all. If God revealed it in prophecy, then we should be ready (*Matthew 24:25*).

A fast-moving freight train of evil is approaching. We have things we want to do and places we want to go. If we have set aside funds for retirement, we can take life easy and do what we want. Yet the train’s whistle is blowing to get our attention. We are with our family on the tracks. Maybe it is time to move (*Matthew 24:15-20*).

Leaving is not always in our plans, but war changes things. My after-college plan was to make a lot of money in business. Instead, of an air-conditioned office, I was sweating with my fellow soldiers in South Vietnam’s energy-sapping heat and high humidity.

Southeast Asia was never on my list of places to see. Later, I realized how privileged I was to have served. No regrets. A president’s order, a low draft number, a major troop call-up and a war; God led me in a direction I needed to go.

I repeat, war disrupts our plans. Dreams go on hold while more important matters take priority—like survival! Over 53,000 who followed a similar path, came home in flag-draped coffins. Others were maimed, wounded, drug-addicted or scarred in other ways. The reaction of some to their service created additional wounds. I thank God that I survived to live in these tumultuous days.



### *Moving beyond the end times*

It is almost time to go. At work is a holy discontent, a longing for a better place—another land. God is preparing his people for the great challenges ahead. Our destination lies beyond this present age. Our journey will bring us to the “Conflict of the Ages” then to the other side, to our expected end.

Another world is coming into view. We are so near in time we can catch a glimpse. Written on our hearts is the land for which we yearn. We were created for life beyond this age, the New Promised Land! It is where Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings. Then, as if it were all a vision, our glimpse starts to fade.

Perhaps you are upset by today’s news. Our beloved nation is almost unrecognizable. It appears corrupt, dark and ugly. It is no longer safe, godly or lovely. Has God pronounced judgment? The influential argue that technology and science are paving the way for a better tomorrow, but how can that be true if they warn about killer robots and build bunkers? Violence is everywhere. Scoffers mock our predictions (2 Peter 3:3). Are we going the way of past nations? As some doomsday prophets ask, “Are we on the precipice?”

No, life does not end. War and catastrophes will occur but, according to Scripture, we are only in transition. Another age awaits (*Revelation 20:7-10*). For God’s saints, it will be almost heaven.

The end of the age is near. The climax will be on a day and hour known to the Father. Long ago, He programmed his universe. The moment for the flood in Noah’s day was ordained. Massive objects are on a collision course with our planet (*Revelation 8:8-11*). God’s sovereignty, power and glory will soon be on display.

We are warned not to form attachments with this world (1 John 2:15-17). Peter counseled Roman believers,

*Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.”*

*1 Peter 1:17*

Living as strangers implies investing minimally in what is passing and the maximum in what is ahead. Saints belong to another country, a place much different than anything on the map. We should focus on our future home, though by no means will our trip be easy.

*If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?*

1 Peter 4:18

The next phase will test us. Leaving what is familiar will mean salvation, survival, serenity and faith. Arriving at the place prepared by God will bring joy to each weary traveler.

### *Women and children in the lifeboats*

Stories in the Bible have more than one purpose. They inspire and offer a path to follow. They provide *teaching, correction, rebuke and training in righteousness* so that God's people *might be thoroughly equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The most detailed accounts in the Old Testament involve Israel or Jacob's twelve tribes. Consider the significance of God's promises to Abraham, Jacob, David and the people Israel. Connect with their history and we will understand the future. If we read of the Exodus from Egypt, looking *for teaching, correction, rebuke and training in righteousness*, we will be better prepared for what is coming.

As we digest the world's recent changes, imagine how life was for Jacob's offspring. According to *Exodus 1*, centuries passed with the Hebrews in Egypt as welcomed guests. In their busyness, they forgot they were strangers. They also forgot the word handed down from their forefathers, yet God did not forget. He knew when and how to arouse Israel's *attention*.

It took a famine in Canaan to move Jacob to Egypt. Another major crisis would send them back. A transition was necessary. A Pharaoh with a heart of evil came to power.

It is almost time for our women and children to board the lifeboats. We are fast-approaching the day of disaster. Imagine it is April 15, 1912, and we are on the maiden voyage of the premier luxury-liner of its day, the *Titanic*. It was said to be unsinkable. The wealthy were on board, so it had to be safe.

The night is clear and the seas eerily calm, but the infamous iceberg is behind us. The future belongs to those who know what comes next, not to the blissfully ignorant. The future belongs to those headed for the lifeboats, the people of God.

### *A new, different kind of Pharaoh*

The winds of change are unpredictable, taking even the experts by surprise. Politics is an example. Who could have guessed the ups and downs of political fortunes of the last decade? It is *God who sets up kings and deposes them (Daniel 2:21)*, that includes pharaohs. As it is now or will soon be, it was in the time before Moses.

*Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt.*

*Exodus 1:8*

When life is good, who wants to leave? When it becomes hard, we search for a way out. That was the reason for the new Pharaoh. Egypt's newest ruler was different. God appointed a wicked king to awaken his people, the Israelites, from their slumber.

Life changed forever. Regardless how good the past may have been, Jacob's children would never again be welcome. Pharaoh intended that each new day for Israel was to be painful. Until their exodus, their stay would progress from bad to worse to intolerable.

Egypt's king was determined. In his land were an alien people so numerous they presented a threat. The nation inside a nation never assimilated, nor did they adopt Egypt's religion. Like Jews through the centuries, God had preserved this unique people as his own.

The anxious Pharaoh saw a day when the Hebrews would join his enemies (*Exodus 1:9-10*). So, he seized their property and made Jacob's descendants his slaves. He also forced the labor that built his cities Pithom and Ramses (*Exodus 1:11*). He placed harsh taskmasters over them, so as they worked, they felt the whip. That surely got their attention.

The Hebrews adjusted to this mistreatment. Perhaps some thought hard times would pass, but the more they were oppressed, *the more they multiplied and spread (Exodus 1:12)*. While the cruelty intensified, so did Pharaoh's fears. Life for God's people became even more difficult. Only then did Israel cry out to God, because their burden was too great to bear (*Exodus 1:11-14*).

During Israel's mistreatment, Egypt grew more soft. Prosperity was a benefit of the Hebrew's free labor, but when they left, the nation's slave-dependent economy collapsed. The Lord enacted vengeance. Egypt felt the sting of God's whip.

### *Wake up!*

Denial is part of our fallen nature. Picture a scene with the elders: Some argued Pharaoh would soon have a change of heart, others thought he would be replaced by a kinder, gentler king. While they transitioned into bondage, did any believe it would last? Did they know God had placed this ruler over them to create their exodus? Maybe this explains what is happening; the squalor, the corruption of power, the drug deaths and the killings. If we are to exit, our love for what we called home must grow cold.

Related to denial is apathy. The apathetic do not want to take responsibility. They care little about freedom until they lose it.

Prior to his return, Jesus described a world of apathy. In the days of Noah, just before the flood, *people were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage right up until Noah entered the ark (Luke 17:27)*. Before raining fire on Sodom, life was routine. They, too, ignored the warnings. The Lord promised it will be that way again.

Another killer is lethargy. Closely related to the others, lethargy is a numbness, a sleep-like state. When vigilance is called for, there is no hope for sleepers.

On his voyage to Tarshish, Jonah slept below deck while the storm raged. The sea threatened to break the ship apart and claim all onboard. Until they woke him, God's prophet was oblivious to what the crew faced on deck (*Jonah 1:1-6*).

When the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, it is not time to nap. Post watchmen on the wall! When the alarm sounds, take flight. Travel light, since on the mountain of God all will be provided.

The saints will not share the fate of the lethargic. They are sober, vigilant and alert, not apathetic or in denial. They recognize that their enemy, Satan, does not sleep. Day and night the devil prowls about *seeking those whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8)*.

Like a warm, cozy blanket, denial, apathy and lethargy numb the senses. We cannot let it happen. We must watch and pray.

*“Wake up, O sleeper,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”*

*Ephesians 5:14*

### *King Croesus*

In the ancient world, Croesus (pronounced *cree-sus*), the Lydian king (560-c547BC), ruled from the city of Sardis. It is said the waters nearby flowed with gold from the mountain-fed streams. Gold made the king legendary, thus the phrase “as rich as Croesus.”

Fabulous wealth was not the only reason Croesus and Sardis became prominent. The city’s capture and defeat by Persia (c547 BC) was a classic example of denial, apathy, and lethargy. A sense of invulnerability led to their downfall. Sardis quickly went from riches to ruin.

Situated high over the plain below, Sardis was approachable only on three well-fortified sides. From the remaining direction, a 1500-foot (approx. 305 meter) vertical wall offered natural protection.

When the Persians attacked, it was discovered that an ascent on the unguarded cliff was possible. The soldier who made the discovery led the assault into the city. Sardis quickly surrendered. Hundreds of years later their capture from the unguarded side was repeated. Sardis had dozed off again.

Lack of vigilance was about to overtake the Church in Sardis. In his judgment on the church, the glorified Christ said,

*“I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. **But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come.**”*

*Revelation 3:2-3*

A great danger from living in a strong, prosperous nation is that we are easily lulled to sleep. The West has long been as *rich as Croesus*. Many Christians are slumbering. Jesus warns, “*Strengthen what remains... and repent.*” If the rich and prosperous do not take heed, sudden disaster will come on them!

### *430 years to the day*

When Pharaoh finally ordered Jacob’s family to go, doubtful any were reluctant to leave. Their trials and tribulations were reason enough to bid Egypt good-by. Pharaoh’s determination to increase

their misery and diminish their numbers quickened the Hebrew's steps as they fled into the desert.

Motivation to leave a slave's life behind was not all they had; the Hebrews received another benefit. Harsh treatment had made them wiry, lean and capable of giving what the wilderness had called for. Without their mistreatment, could they have endured a hot, dry desert? As a hard and demanding drill sergeant prepares his troops, so hardships toughen God's people. It is so they will prove to be victorious overcomers.

Do we know our prophetic calendar? God told Abram that when 400 years were complete, his offspring would leave the place where they were slaves (*Genesis 15:13*). Scripture says Israel stayed 430 years *to the very day* (*Exodus 12:40-41*).

As the "5 Major Rules for Interpretation" suggest, if we look for the near/far prophetic applications, could the *very day* reference in *Exodus 12:40-41*, provide a clue for a soon-to-be event? I believe the exactly 400 or 430-years are significant. This fact is included to alert God's people to a coming mass exodus from North America.

Nebuchadnezzar's army swept through Judah and Jerusalem, leaving the temple and city in ruins. A remnant was taken into exile, while the Babylonians put many others to the sword. No sooner had Jews begun to adjust to captivity than a letter arrived from God's prophet. Through Jeremiah, God told his people to bless their captors then, when seventy years were complete, they would return to their homeland (*Jeremiah 29:4-11*). It happened just as the Lord said. After seventy years, the Persian king Cyrus granted Jews the freedom to go back to their land (*Isaiah 44:28, 45:1, 45:13*).

The Lord declares that He is the Almighty, *the first and the last, the beginning and the end* and that He is sovereign over the affairs of men. Prophecy confirms this. Before anything comes into being, God will announce it through his prophets (*Isaiah 42:9*).

*The Sovereign Lord does nothing without first revealing his plans to his servants, the prophets.*

*Amos 3:7*

Why did God promise Abram an exact number of years before his descendants would leave Egypt? Why was it precise and not an odd number or a fraction of a year? Could this mean an exodus and

scattering of a remnant from North America happens exactly 400-430 years after the Pilgrim's arrival? As with England's Dissenters, might America's religious leaders persecute the saints, stirring them to leave, or foreign enemies to drive them out (*Luke 21:23-24*)?

Does the United States have prophetic significance? I used to scoff at the idea, but no more. I was reminded of the uniqueness my country possessed. Think of the U.S. in Biblical terms as "the nations." Stamped into its coins and currency is the Latin "*e pluribus unum*," from more or many (nations) comes one (nation).

Maybe the clock began ticking November 11, 1620, with the Pilgrim's onboard signing of the Mayflower Compact. Harboring at Cape Cod, they created a statement of purpose. In it they affirmed they came to the New World, "*for the Glory of God*" and "*the advancement of the Christian faith.*"

Will it be four hundred (*Genesis 15:13*) or 430 years (*Exodus 12:40-41*) or neither? How long a time span will it be before God's people make their exodus to "the nations"? All I know is that, at the appointed time, it will happen. It must! First, a new ruler will be raised up by God to prepare us for the trip. When it is time to go, no saint will resist the order.

The light lit by our Puritan fathers grows dim. From America's shores, the beacon of freedom and truth has sent its beams around the world. When this nation no longer shines salvation's light, then great darkness will descend over the kingdoms of men.

WAKE UP! It is near departure time--but where do we go? Is there an escape? Yes, but for now we must prepare to *endure hardship like a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:2)*.

ATTENTION! (Nothing grabs our attention like suffering. It turns thoughts to God and to what comes next. It stirs hearts to go forward no matter how painful or great the cost.) *For-waaard MARCH!*

\*

Discussion:

- Do you recall the circumstances when you left home for the first time? What was God's purpose in moving you?
- What do you consider home? What makes it home? How attached are you? What would it take to get you to leave?
- What should our role be in today's world? Should we try to recapture the good old days or prepare self, family and others for a challenging and exciting future?
- Why do you think God allowed the Hebrews to suffer for so long before "*coming down to help*"? (*Exodus 3:7-10*)



*The LORD foils the plans of the nations;  
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.  
But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,  
the purposes of his heart through all generations.*

*Psalm 33:10-11*

*In him we were also predestined according to the plan of  
him who works out everything in conformity with the  
purpose of his will...*

*Ephesians 1:11*

## Key #2 *The Plan*

\*

Earth has always been a war zone. Lose sight of that and prophecy ceases to become relevant. It is foolish to blame God for the casualties when it is the enemy who seeks to kill, maim and destroy. If we think about it, war explains a lot. Rule #1 is “Know the enemy.” Rule #2 is “Know who is on your side.”

*Genesis 3* and *Revelation 12* are the best places to start. They give background to what is happening. They introduce our powerful real-life foe. Near the Bible’s beginning and end, God lifts the curtain that separates the opposing sides and those in the middle. The serpent that deceived Eve is the same being who leads the powers of darkness. No truce with this enemy; there is only victory or defeat.

In *Genesis 3:15*, we are promised the woman’s “seed” will one day crush Satan’s head. According to Paul, Satan will be crushed under the saint’s feet (*Romans 16:20*) (“Saints” is a synonym for the people of God or those in the middle of the conflict.)

It fits with another prophecy:

*They overcame him  
by the blood of the Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony;  
they did not love their lives so much  
as to shrink from death.*

*Revelation 12:11*

### *The Master’s strategy*

Because the Lord’s Kingdom and Glory are under constant assault, the fight rages on. Our God is a Warrior King! He has a sovereign, Battle Plan for victory. He has declared it in His Word. Regarding His plan, it was *first revealed to the prophets, and is unveiled in these last times for our sake* (*1 Peter 1:16-20*).

*Before* going into battle, every commander devises a strategy. Our King is no exception. When Christ comes, he will rescue his people from the hand of the devil. Then, after all are saved, He becomes the Avenger. Those who mistreated his saints are destined for destruction (*Revelation 16:14*).

One of the Bible's early battles involving Satan was over an old man and his barren wife. (People are often the battlefield.) Abram (later Abraham, the father of our faith) and his wife Sarai (later Sarah) were Ground Zero, the center of the action.

In Abram God found the man that was required (*Genesis 15:6*). In his day, faith in the Lord was in short supply. None since Noah, Abram's ancestor, had been as well prepared for his crucial role—God's servant Job being an exception,

Though Abram had a trained army of 318 men (*Genesis 14:14*), and a large household of servants, flocks and herds, he lacked an heir. The barren womb of Sarai was a source of heartbreak. Infertility was Satan's doing. Abram was ninety and his wife, Sarai, eighty—both well beyond child-bearing years. Only God could grant an heir.

In *Genesis 15:1*, the Lord told Abram he was his shield and his *very great reward*. He then promised that his servant would have a son. The heir Abram longed for would come from his own body. Then God took his servant outside to look at the night sky. Lifting his head, Abram heard his offspring would number as the stars. *Abram believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness (15:6).*

Later, a *dark and dreadful sleep* came over him (*Genesis 15:12*). In a vision, Abram was shown a small but important part of the war—his and ours. He felt dread. It was the presence of evil.

Whether in a dream or awake, God said,

*“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.”*

*Genesis 15:12-14*

God let Abram in on his plan because he believed. It is the Lord's pattern to reveal his intentions to his servants (*Amos 3:7*). His servants then pass it on to other reliable servants. Since Abram recorded his visions and God's words for future servants, he earned the title “prophet” (*Genesis 20:6-7*).

### *A country not their own*

Though Abram knew, Egypt was unspoken in the *dreadful dream* (*Genesis 15:13-14*). Earlier, in *Genesis 12*, he took his household

there to escape famine. Circumstances were nearly identical when, later, grandson Jacob moved his family to Egypt (*Genesis 47:27*).

For Abram's household, food was provided in Egypt, yet for only a short season. Remaining 400 years was in the plan for Jacob's sons (the fourth generation of descendants).

The dream, in *Genesis 15*, was more like a nightmare. No one wants to see their children's children enslaved. Most work and save so the succeeding generations will have it better. We would hate to see family living under the heavy burden of slavery, yet that is what God promised. The vision, however, did not end there. Abram's offspring would be freed from their bondage and come away *with great possessions (Genesis 15:14)* and land of their own.

According to God's Battle Plan, centuries of living as strangers in a strange land and years of oppression, would produce a mighty people, a nation belonging to God. They would act as the Lord's strong arm, bringing judgment on the wicked Canaanites.

Who received God's plan In *Genesis 15*? It was an old man without an heir or any land of his own. The Lord told a *wandering Aramean (Deuteronomy 26:5)*, that his reward would be later. God's servant believed every word! The promise was also for his offspring, Israel, not Jacob but the generation of Jacob's sons.

***"In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."***

*Genesis 15:15-16*

If Sodom's condition was an indication of Canaan's wickedness, the Amorites had to be an abomination (*Genesis 19:13*). Included in "The Battle Plan" was the Amorites' judgment. It was centuries away, yet God promised Abram that his offspring's sword would destroy the Amorites, then replace them in the land.

### ***The full measure of wickedness***

For the wicked, judgment has long ago been declared. Exactly when, is still undetermined. Apparently, the world's sin has not yet reached its full measure, but it must be close.

The wicked will appear to prosper from their evil deeds. They will enjoy forbidden pleasures and live godless lives. When the appointed time comes, they will feel God's wrath, the double-edged sword of *the rider on the white horse*. Their possessions will remain as an inheritance for God's people.

*A little while and the wicked will be no more;  
though you look for them,  
they will not be found.  
But the meek will inherit the land  
and enjoy great peace.*

*Psalm 37:10-11*

To seal His promise, God made a covenant with Abram.

*On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river [or Wadi] of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates- the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites."*

*Genesis 15:18-20*

What happened to the above list? They vanished like smoke. God gave their land to Israel. As consolation, the faithful whose father's suffered in Egypt would receive a bountiful land for themselves and their children.

The boundaries God promised in *Genesis 15:15-16* were realized during David's reign, but expansion ceased under Solomon, his son. Foreign brides and alliances with pagan rulers (practices expressly forbidden by the Lord) put an end to God's blessings on Israel.

No other nation has ever received a land grant directly from God. Israel's territory split, then diminished under David's successors. Eventually, Israel then Judah became strangers in other lands.

In May of 1948, the miraculous occurred. *Dry bones took on flesh (Ezekiel 37:21)*. The Jewish state of Israel was formed in partial fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. The Yom Kippur War, October 1973, expanded Israel's boundaries from Sinai (Egypt) to the Golan Heights (Syria). Israeli territory does not yet extend from the Wadi in Egypt to the Euphrates, but because it was given by God we know it will happen according to plan.

Israel's enemies occupy territory once belonging to Jacob's offspring. Satan fights for the prophecy made to Abram to remain unfulfilled, yet his efforts will become futile.

There are no errors with God. The problem is in our inability to understand. What God said, He meant! Jacob's descendants will live in the Promised Land *and* enjoy it forever. Complete fulfillment is still future, but when God restores the kingdom to Israel, it will surpass the glory of David and his son Solomon (*Acts 1:6-7*). Joshua assigned the boundaries in Canaan for the tribes of Israel. As creation's Lord, Jesus will determine them for all nations except Israel. Thousands of years ago they were laid out by the Father.

When the measure of the world's sin reaches the limit, the wicked will be displaced and then destroyed. Though hardly recognized, the Lord is preparing *a chosen people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood—a people belonging to him (1 Peter 2:9)*. Before receiving great possessions, these saints will be subject to mistreatment.

### *Another terrifying vision*

Not all of God's promises to Abram were fulfilled in four or five hundred years (*Genesis 22:15-18*). Some await the Millennium or end of the age to come. It is the third and last age of sin and death.

Prophet Daniel had a vision like Abram's. It, too, was like a bad dream. Daniel was "terrified," and "deeply troubled" by what he saw (*7:7, 15 and 28*). Parallels with Abram's dark vision are unmistakable. A ruler like Pharaoh will appear. He will speak boastfully as if consumed with pride. Does that sound like Satan, or the Antichrist?

Egypt was the furnace of affliction for God's people, Israel. At the end of this age, the world will be a white-hot furnace of affliction for those destined for the Kingdom.

Read Daniel's disturbing vision:

*As I watched, the horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.*

*Daniel 7:21-22*

At God's appointed time, Pharaoh declared war. Another pharaoh (i.e. the horn) will wage war against the saints *and defeat them*

(*Revelation 12:17*). What did Daniel's vision mean? So we might understand, God presented it another way:

*He [the king from the fourth beast kingdom] will speak against the Most High and **oppress his saints** and try to change the set times and the laws. **The saints will be handed over to him** for a time, times, and half a time.*

*Daniel 7:25*

Like Pharaoh, the king in Daniel's vision uses his authority to oppress the saints. He tries to change set decrees and appointed times. God showed Daniel that his people's trial would last for *a time, times and half a time*. Through this vision, we know His plans for the saints to endure will be no more than three-and-a-half years.

### *The Plan for victory*

As dark and terrifying as Daniel's vision was, there is more. Read below and think of the Hebrew's example. Consider what was then hardship's purpose and be encouraged.

*But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. **Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High.** His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.*

*Daniel 7:26-27*

The first stage of the end of the age comes with a darkness that leaves God's people deeply troubled. Afflictions, like those the Hebrews endured, will fall on the people of God. After the time when evil prevails passes, *the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. And He will reign forever and ever (Revelation 11:15)*. After great hardship, the saints will emerge with great possessions (*Zechariah 14:12-14*).

Jesus will receive the kingdoms of this earth promised by the Father. The beloved will belong to Christ and Christ to his beloved (*Song of Songs 2:4*). They are each other's reward.

Daniel had more unsettling visions, but God reiterated his plan. Great distress was coming, but afterward, the Kingdom will belong to the saints *forever and ever (Daniel 8:23-27, 11:33, 12:1)*.

### *The inheritance*

Middle Eastern traditions have lasted thousands of years. With respect to property, it is much the same today as it was in Jesus' day. Land stays in families. The eldest may labor like a hired man, but at his father's passing he inherits the estate. He must work for the good of what will one day be his as well as his heirs.

In the coming age, only sons who remain faithful in God's household will receive an inheritance. Saints must labor as servants, often enduring the hardships of a bond slave, but they know one day all that will change. Offered to God's people is his plan and the hope of a bright future, that is if (a condition) they *endure patiently to the end* (*Jeremiah 29:10-14, 2 Timothy 2:11-12*).

\*

### Discussion:

- From this chapter, what do we learn about the Battle Plan? From Abram and Daniel's vision, what is the future of the kingdom of darkness as opposed to the Kingdom of Light?
- Can we hold back the creeping shadow of evil in this age any longer than temporarily? Why must we face wickedness?
- Something bad must happen before something great. What bad experience have you had that worked out for the good?
- What have you been taught about God's saints in the last days that conflicts with Daniel's disturbing vision? What is in store for God's people at the end? Compare this with Jesus' prophecy in *Matthew 24:9-25*.



*All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God;*

*You will be blessed in the city  
and blessed in the country.*

*The fruit of you womb will be blessed...*

*Deuteronomy 28:2-4a*

*You will know that your children will be many,  
and your descendants like the grass of the earth.*

*Job 5:25*

*A large population is a king's glory...*

*Proverbs 14:28a*

*“When the Son of Man comes into his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”*

*Jesus, Matthew 25:31-32*

## Key #11 Gold n' Stuff

\*

Choose any warm Spring Saturday. Take a leisurely drive down a residential street of an American middle-class neighborhood. That time of year you will probably notice a "Yard Sale" or two. Maybe it is a "Garage Sale" but whatever it is called it means the owner is cleaning out his junk, the clothes no longer needed as well as the gifts barely unwrapped, and selling them cheap.

Most Americans love yard sales. It is hard to say who is happier: the one receiving cash for their trash or the buyer with a bargain. Ironically, the prize they found may be stored and gather dust, then the buyer has a sale and continues the cycle.

### *Watch out!*

Why our love for stuff? The answer might be our supply of funds and habit of impulse buying. Many will purchase what they want rather than need. Perhaps we have been conditioned by advertisers to believe we "need" this or that. For others shopping is a stress-relieving, "feel-good" experience. To some, shopping is like needing a fix for an addict. *Shop-a-holic* are what they are called.

Jesus warns:

*"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."*

*Luke 12:15*

Materialism was what the Lord described. According to Him, it is far from harmless, but because materialism has become part of our culture, we fail to see it for what it is. An overwhelming desire to acquire more is a temptation that must be resisted.

The Bible warns God's people not to fall for prey to greed. Life is not a game of "He who dies with the most toys wins!" Christ's message is the opposite: He who dies with the most will lose. The winnowing fork will again separate the saints from those who measure their life by the abundance of their possessions.

Crucial trials were in the past for the Israelites. Gone were the complainers, the fearful, the rebellious, all idolaters plus the sexually immoral. Death kept the chaff that departed Egypt from receiving an

inheritance. Chaff and wheat were *called* to leave Egypt and enter the Promised Land, but they were not all *chosen* (*Matthew 22:14*).

No one enters Christ's Kingdom without obeying the King. Obedience must be tested. Achan is a tragic example. Of all the stories of what might have been, his may be the saddest. Achan came so far, only to stumble at the finish line. *Joshua 7* is where we find his tragic tale. If we have hopes of hearing "Well done, good and faithful servant," then we better pay attention.

After overcoming and seeing so much, this Israelite fell for the lie that his actions were done in secret. Why would anyone offered so much, like Achan, trade it for a little gold and stuff?

The reason may become obvious. Achan was not content with what God promised. Greed is rooted in discontent. It wants no delay for gratification. Achan, like Lucifer, desired that which belonged to God, a share in the Land was not sufficient.

### *Marching orders*

Before Israel set foot inside fallen Jericho, God said:

*The seventh time around, when the priest sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city! The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the LORD ... But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury."*

*Joshua 6:16-17a, 18-19*

God's people marched around the city. On the seventh trip around, on the seventh day, Jericho collapsed. The large-stoned walls fell inward crushing the city's defenders.

Since victory belonged to the Lord alone, he had sole claim to the spoils; the gold, the silver, the bronze and the iron. Jericho was the first fruits of all the Canaanite cities that would follow. One-by-one the fortresses fell before the men of Israel. The gold and stuff of the other cities would be theirs to possess, but not Jericho's riches. They were to be the firstfruits devoted to God (*Joshua 6:16-19*).

Jericho was His anyway. Everything is His (*Psalm 24:1*). "Lord" implies ownership. Jesus is Lord of all, meaning He is the rightful ruler of all creation (*Revelation 3:14*). As King over all the earth, the silver and gold belong to him and the cattle on a thousand hills is his as well (*Haggai 2:6-8, Psalm 50:10*). At best, we are caretakers or stewards over God's possessions.

Jericho's gold came from the Lord's mines, yet their citizens gave their praise to idols. They worshiped their wealth instead of their Maker (*Luke 16:13*). The Lord's plan would remedy this. Jericho would be turned into rubble. The city itself would become ruins. Its valuables would be returned to the One to whom they belonged. The gold n' stuff would regain its true purpose.

At issue, was God's Lordship over his people. The order not to touch the devoted things was a test of love. The command came with a warning (*Joshua 6:18*). Israel was God's possession, so obeying was a must (*Deuteronomy 7:6*). Each would come to know to whom they belonged. Could they claim loyalty if it was never tested?

All things, including our lives, are the exclusive property of our Creator. Desire to possess what is not ours is "sin." We know the rest of Adam's story. Through the ages, his covetous act was repeated millions of times. *Do not touch. Do not take and eat.* Then desire, when it conceives, *gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death* (*James 1:15*).

Nothing has changed. Israel's test was like the one in the garden. God gave Adam one restriction, "...*you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*" (*Genesis 2:17*). That unique tree belonged to God alone. Its fruit was devoted. All other trees were for his stewards, but the tree in the middle of the garden was the exception. Unlawful taking was punishable by death, and so death came to us all. Because of Achan's sin, righteous men lost their lives as we shall see. It is God's pattern.

Achan's downfall caused Israel's fall. His story is a preview.

*But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan, son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the LORD's anger burned against Israel.*

*Joshua 7:1*

### Lust of the eyes

Achan “stumbled onto” the devoted things (*Hebrews 4:13*). The trap was set. Seduction became impulse. Impulse hatched an evil plan. Becoming richer than he was already became a fatal attraction.

*People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

1 Timothy 6:9-10

Sin entered the camp and, with it, God’s curse. When Israel went off to fight the weaker army of Ai, they were roundly defeated. It was as the Lord said: If anyone took the stuff devoted to me, the entire camp would suffer (*Joshua 6:18*).

Grief descended upon Israel like a sudden summer storm. When Joshua received the report about Ai, he fell on his face before the Lord. Wailing swept the camp, all due to one man’s disobedience. *There was sin in the camp*, so the cancer had to be removed. The remedy was to take the stolen things, plus the offender, his family, his animals and all his possessions, and destroy them.

Among the Israelites, who would commit such an unfaithful act? Where were these sacred objects? Again, it was an opportunity for the winnowing fork to teach.

*“In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe that the LORD takes shall come forward clan by clan; the clan that the LORD takes shall come forward family by family; and the family that the LORD takes shall come forward man by man. He who is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him.*

Joshua 7:14-15a

The Lord revealed the objects of Achan’s lust. Judah’s privileged son, his family and all his stuff, would forever be separated from God’s people. The culprit, Achan, was forthright.

*Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them*

*and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”*

*Joshua 7:20-21*

In many modern courtrooms, Achan's full disclosure and stated remorse might result in a judge's leniency. Who cannot relate? The robe was stunning. Who could resist having it? Compared to all of Jericho's plunder, the silver and gold in Achan's possession hardly deserved notice. God noticed. Since a little yeast leavens the whole loaf, the Lord commanded that Achan must die.

### *The gamble*

To Achan, the gold and stuff were coveted. He weighed the silver and gold carefully—two hundred shekels and fifty shekels of gold. How costly? Before taking the devoted things, he also considered *risk vs. reward*. Achan decided to risk. Was his prize worth his soul? Was it worth the loss of thirty-six of Israel's finest (*Joshua 7:3-5*)? Was it worth his family and everything associated with him?

Covetousness is at the root of gambling. Achan gambled that he could have what the Lord had prohibited. It cost him everything. What are the odds of winning by disobeying God?

Gambling is in our culture's blood. We have sports betting, poker and other card games. There are licensed casinos with slots, blackjack and roulette, the state and national lottery, racetrack wagering, the stock market, church bingos and "cash bash" as well as many more. The "gaming industry" rakes in billions while it wrecks thousands of lives. We are being set-up and we all suffer for it.

What is coming will test for greed every man, woman and child. It will be our final exam before the Millennium, the 1000-year reign of Christ. The winnowing fork is ready. Gamblers beware!

Jesus was subjected to the love test. In the wilderness, Satan offered three opportunities for him to fail. With any one, he hoped to disqualify our Lord from being the Savior of the world. If only the enemy could incite greed, then earth's kingdoms would be his.

One temptation involved gold and stuff.

*Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."*

*Matthew 4:8-9*

It was the ultimate gamble and the ultimate garage sale; the world's gold and stuff in exchange for a little worship. If Satan was worshiped, the son of man would receive earth's temporal riches.

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

*Then the devil left him...*

*Matthew 4:10-11a*

Unlike Achan, Jesus sharply rejected the offer and rebuked the devil. Had He not refused, humanity would be without hope. Had Jesus opted for immediate gratification, there would have been no cross and we would be in our sins. Christ knew the earth was his if only He proved faithful as a Son. Had Jesus the lack of self-control of Achan, he would have opted for the temporary. He would not have waited for his inheritance. We would drown in our misery.

### *Heap of rocks*

Achan, his sons and daughters, the robe, the silver and gold; everything that belonged to him, including his cattle, donkeys and sheep, were taken outside the camp.

*Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day.*

*Joshua 7:25b-26a*

Instead of residing in a fine home in Canaan, Achan's ashes lay under a heap of rocks. The camp was cleansed by the fire. The purging satisfied God's anger. What should we then expect from God if Achan's greed is the stuff we hear about daily?

Fire, destruction and rubble (stones) will clean the earth again.

*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.*

*When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry:*

*“Woe! Woe, O great city,  
O Babylon, city of power!  
In one hour your doom has come!”*

*Revelation 18:8-10*

More than beautiful robes from Babylon will seduce the nations. In the last days, the whole of Babylon the Great, with its wealth and luxuries, will lead many astray. People will be *lovers of themselves, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God* (2 Timothy 3:2, 4). No one residing in Babylon will be content. They will crave gold n' stuff, and, find it in abundance. They will be unaware of the cost until it is too late. Our Lord has warned all who will listen.

*What good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?*

*Mark 8:36*

The covetous spirit, the pursuit and worship of the god Mammon, is quickly reaching its climax. Because of exposure to the great riches of Babylon, many Christians are set to turn from eternal salvation to pursue fleeting wealth.

### *One last test*

Before we settle into the next age, the Lord has a sobering warning. “Do not take *the mark of the beast!*” (Revelation 13:16-17). Disobedience is not an option.

Without the ability to buy or sell, the Lord's people will find themselves with a choice. Will they totally depend on God? Will they succumb to hunger and fear then bow to the beast for food? The winnowing fork separates all who worship Mammon. Like Achan, those who worship gold n' stuff will perish (Psalm 37:18-20).

The beast's mark is permanent! It is like an owner's brand, an unchangeable sign. For its wearers, the mark is a death sentence just as Babylon's robe was for Achan (Revelation 14:9b-11).

What more is necessary? Even with this Bible account, many will yield to their covetous desires. Those who take the mark will burn



alongside the objects they craved. Their bodies will lie under the smoldering rubble, but their souls are destined for the pit.

Men and women who obey God live forever! (1 John 2:15-17). Those who reject *the things of this world* (i.e. the gold n' stuff devoted for destruction) pass the love test.

The trainer puts the coveted treat in his hand and raises it to his shoulder level. His command is "Stay!" His dog sits with all eyes on her master. Tail wagging again; she hears her master's firm voice, "Stay!" and she stays. The animal is anxious yet remains obedient. Then the dog hears, "Okay, girl, JUMP!"

Immediately, she leaps into the air and takes the biscuit from her happy master's hand. Both master and dog receive their reward. It is the joy of discipline, delayed gratification's wonderful reward.

\*

Discussion:

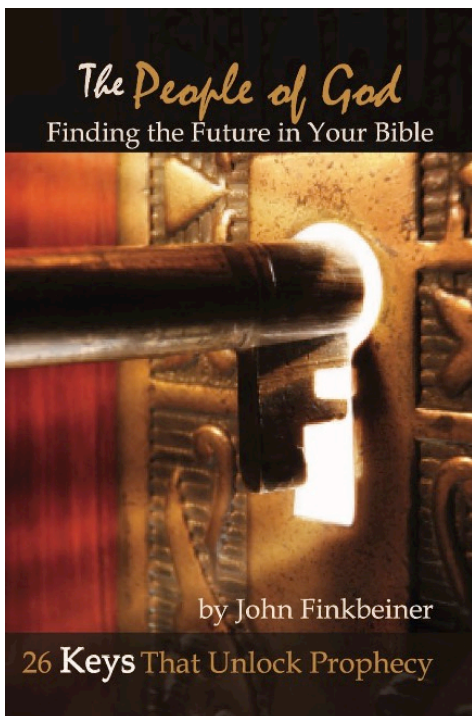
- Does materialism affect only the rich, middle-class or poor? What is behind our desire for more, better and shinier stuff?
- Why did all Israel suffer because of Achan? Is it unique that a nation pays for the sins of a few or one? (*2 Samuel 24:10-17*)
- If the history of Israel instructs us about the last days, what temptation must we face if we are to dwell with Christ? Why might most in our culture choose the worship of Mammon?
- Should it concern us that many of the youngest generation cite riches as their future goal? What does this imply?
- Is God opposed to things or is their worship what angers him? (*Romans 1:25, Exodus 20:4-6*) Where do you come closest to crossing the line? What is behind the pursuit of a simpler lifestyle among many of God's people?

*How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!*

*Psalm 133:1*

*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ... then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*

*Philippians 2:1a, 2-3*



*A fresh, insightful and hope-filled look at prophecy's keys*

# **The People of God**

**Finding the Future in Your Bible**

**26 Keys That Unlock Prophecy**

by John Finkbeiner

Order the complete book from the publisher [Booklocker.com](http://Booklocker.com)

<https://www.booklocker.com/p/books/4816.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood  
or online bookstore.