

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD

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WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD

Have you ever wondered what the future holds? Not just ten years, or ten months, or even ten days from now? Those whose financial interest is bound up in the stock market know from experience that a matter of hours can wipe out billions of investment dollars.

Forget hours. Someone with hard cash on a horse would like to know in advance what the next minute will bring.

But even a minute might be too long. Someone at a casino, with a fortune depending on a toss of the die, would like to know what the next two

seconds hold.

History reveals that the human fascination with knowing the future is not new. Magicians and astrologers were frequently amongst the most highly regarded counsellors in the courts of ancient monarchs. For instance, in Genesis Chapter 41, we read that in one night, Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt, had two dreams. The next morning, he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt, in the hope of uncovering the events it foretold. Hundreds of years later, in Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar followed the same practice (see Daniel 2:1-11; 4:6,7). Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, King Belshazzar, upon seeing a bloodless hand write in fiery letters on his palace wall during a drunken party, called in panic for his sorcerers and soothsayers to interpret the writing that spelled out Babylon's fast-approaching doom (Daniel 5:7,8).

In all these cases, the magicians and astrologers were unable to interpret the messages and the coming events they revealed.

Today, discoveries in science and technology have enabled humans to build a huge range of devices capable of combining massive quantities of data. These can be used to predict various things in the future, such as artificial intelligence, economic trends, and developments in climate. It is to be admitted, however, that science not infrequently fails to account for certain factors, and large-scale calamities too often strike with little or no obvious warning. Tsunamis, megafires and pestilences are examples of catastrophes that have caught country leaders and citizens alike by surprise. Thus, despite the astounding knowledge that has developed with the rise of modern science, the words of James 4:13,14 still ring true today:

“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”

Despite the evident inaccuracy of many projections of the future, the human desire to trust in them seems almost overwhelming. One example of this is the surge of interest in the writings of self-proclaimed psychic Sylvia Browne that has arisen with the coronavirus pandemic. Born in 1936, Browne frequently appeared on television shows in the 1990s and made multiple predictions about missing persons. Many of these were later proven to be false. Despite this, she remained a popular figure until her death in 2013.

In her 2008 book *End of Days: Prophecies and Predictions about the End of the World*, Browne predicted amongst other things the sudden rise of a severe pneumonia-like illness in 2020 that would spread throughout the globe. As the coronavirus dispersed all over the world, a tweet directing attention to Browne's prediction attracted literally thousands of likes and comments. Despite the skepticism expressed in news articles, which pointed out many of Browne's failed predictions, Amazon sales of the novel surged, and it rapidly

gained a place in the top ten best sellers list.*

All this begs the question, how can we know which prophecies to trust? When our world seems to be crumbling to pieces, is there any hope left? Is there any way we can find certainty about the future?

I believe that there is a place where truth can be found, even in this age of pluralism. I believe that we can find hope amidst the chaos of global pestilences, economic upheaval and environmental catastrophe. I believe that we can know for certain the key events of the future, the events that we need to know about in order to make decisions of the utmost importance; decisions that have significance for not just this life, but for the life

¹ Ahmed, T. (2020). A psychic's book supposedly predicting coronavirus sees surge in demand after Kim Kardashian tweeted about it. *Newsweek*. Retrieved 30 March, 2020, from IT <https://www.newsweek.com/coronavirus-sylvia-browne-prediction-kim-kardashian-end-days-book-1492183>.

to come. That place is the Bible.

Up to thirty percent of the Bible is comprised of prophecies, all of which date from thousands of years ago. And still more significantly, over the millennia of time since it was written, Bible prophecy has been shown again and again to be reliable and trustworthy. Bible prophecy points us to a God of truth and love, a God in whom we can find lasting peace and joy. A God who longs to give each individual hope about the future. A God who has revealed through His servants the prophets mysteries about the future to which many people today turn a blind eye. Let's consider what the Bible has to say about prophecy, some prophecies about the times in which we are living, and how these can bring hope to our lives.

TRUE OR FALSE?

As we have seen, many human predictions of the future have failed to materialise. The Bible actually contains many warnings of false prophets. In His well-known Sermon on the Mount, Jesus

Himself warned, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves”* (Matthew 7:15). When speaking to His disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem, as well as events just before His second coming Jesus again warned, *“Take heed that no one deceives you”* (Matthew 24:4). He continued, *“For many will come in My name, saying ‘I am the Christ’, and will deceive many”* (verse 5).

In verse 11, we find very similar words: *“Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”*

And in verse 24, Jesus warned against miracles worked by false christs and prophets which, He said, would be so convincing that even “the elect”—His closest followers—would find it difficult to distinguish between the true and the false.

Since the Bible contains so many warnings against false prophets, how are we to know which prophecies, and prophets, to trust? What should we

do about claims that sound extremely convincing? Are they all reliable?

Faithful to His character, God does not give us these warnings, and leave us to try to figure out for ourselves what is true and what is false. God is a God of truth. The Bible also gives a list of criteria against which we can compare a prophet and his or her teachings. By using these tests, we will be protected from deceptions that can lead us away from God.

BIBLE TESTS OF A PROPHET

1. Do the prophets' predictions come true?

Deuteronomy 18:21,22 says, *“And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?—when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.’”* If someone who claims to be a prophet gives

messages that are not accurate, then we know that they are not speaking words from the God of truth. We should not pay attention to what that prophet says. Instead, we should study the Bible to find out what God's prophets said.

2. Does the prophet acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is God?

"By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:2). Many people today deny the truths of the Bible, including that Jesus Christ, who lived 2,000 years ago, was God in human flesh. According to the apostle John, those who do this are not being led by God.

3. Does the prophet live a Christ-like life?

"You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16, see also verses 15-20). It is not enough for a prophet to say that he or she believes Jesus of Nazareth is God. Does the person show by their

life that they believe in God's life-changing power? Those who do not follow God's word are not sent by Him.

4. Does the prophet's message agree with the Bible?

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). This is the ultimate test. Sometimes those who are not following God can say some things that harmonise with the Bible. We should not disobey what the Bible says, just because someone who is not following God says those things. At the same time, we should be very careful that we never place complete confidence in everything a person says, without checking every statement by the Bible. Sometimes a person may say some right things, but some wrong things. The Bible is our standard in everything. We should always check everything by God's word.

During times of crisis, it can be easy to give in to panic, and believe and do things that we might

not do under ordinary circumstances. In those moments it can be easy to give in to despair. But in the Bible, we find not only warnings against false prophets and deceptive teachings, but genuine prophecies that reveal both the future, and a God who holds the future in His hands.

Prophecy is one of the most interesting and exciting Bible topics to study. Writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul said that “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*” (2 Timothy 3:16); that is, useful, or helpful. According to this verse, then, Bible prophecy, which makes up such a significant proportion of the Bible, is valuable, even essential, to study. In the Bible we find prophecies that we can trust and that can be understood by all who sincerely desire to know God’s will and obey it (John 7:17). Although much Bible prophecy is given in symbols (see, for instance, Revelation 1:1), the Bible explains, and is consistent with, itself (2 Peter 1:19-21). Although the Bible was written by people, the prophets were guided by the Holy Spirit in what

they wrote. Their lives were transformed by the truths they learned and preached. Thus, the Bible is not just the words of people. It has the authority of God Almighty.

So let's examine a prophecy spoken by Jesus Christ Himself about Jerusalem during the time of the Roman Empire. This prophecy reveals to us some key points about Bible prophecy in general. We will also see that this prophecy about ancient Jerusalem has a message for us today.

BELIEVE AND ACT

In AD31, at the very close of His earthly ministry, Jesus had been teaching in the temple. This magnificent building was the pride of not only the Jewish nation, but also of many Roman rulers. The Roman government had spent tremendous sums of money to decorate it, and because of this it had come to be known as Herod's temple (Herod being a Roman governor). The temple was built of huge marble stones, and was a vision of glory and apparent indestructability. Yet, as the

disciples pointed out its massive stones to Jesus, He made the startling prediction, *“There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down”* (Matthew 24:2).

Later, when Jesus was on the Mount of Olives, four of His disciples came to Him privately, and asked, *“When shall these things be?”* (Matthew 24:3).

Jesus did not answer by giving the disciples a specific date when the temple, and indeed the entire city of Jerusalem, would be destroyed. Instead, He gave them signs by which to know when its destruction was very near. The terrible time would come suddenly and swiftly. Jesus warned them, *“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains”* (Matthew 24:15,16). When the banners of the Roman army were set up outside Jerusalem, that was the signal to leave immediately. Those who were out in the field must not re-enter the city. Those on the roofs

of their houses were not to pause to save even their most treasured possessions (Matthew 24:17,18). To hesitate even a moment would mean the difference between life and death.

During the reign of Herod, Jerusalem had not only been made extremely beautiful, but had been strengthened by towers, walls and fortresses. The city itself was ideally located to withstand the fiercest attacks, and due to the natural strength of its position had only been captured by King David's army hundreds of years after the Israelites entered the land of Canaan (1 Chronicles 11:4-7). Anyone who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in the days of Jesus would have been looked upon as someone who had completely lost his or her reason, and ought to be locked up in an insane asylum.

But Jesus understood the laws of cause and effect, laws which He Himself had put into operation when He made all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:2,3). He understood that individuals,

as well as nations, reap what they have sown (Galatians 6:7). He knew that the rejection of God by the Jewish nation as a whole, was quickly banishing from the city the love, peace and security which would have come through obedience to the truth (Psalm 119:165; Isaiah 48:22). He foresaw that the same stubbornness by which the Jewish leaders rejected His love, would lead them to persecute His followers, driving them from the land of Israel, until those who had come to take delight in evil and violence alone were left. Then, the city would fall victim to its own sinful course.

All the predictions given by Christ about the destruction of Jerusalem were fulfilled exactly when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus and his army in AD70. Not one stone of the temple was left upon another. Both city and sanctuary were demolished to their foundations, and the ground upon which the holy house had stood was “plowed like a field” (Jeremiah 26:18). Yet not one Christian perished in the fearful decimation.

On that day in AD31, forty years before the terrible event took place, Jesus told His disciples, “*When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then... let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.*” (Luke 21:20,21). After the Romans under Cestius besieged the city, they unexpectedly abandoned their position when conditions appeared favourable for an immediate attack. While the Jewish army pursued the retreating Roman forces, the Christians, who recognised the sign spoken of by Christ, fled for their lives to a place of safety—the city of Pella, on the other side of the Jordan River. Thus, those who believed the sayings of Christ, and acted on them, were saved, while millions who rejected His words were destroyed in one of the most horrific tragedies of all time.*

* For more on this, see White, E. G. 1911. *The Great Controversy*. Reprint, Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2017, pp. 14-31. Available from https://egwwritings-a.akamaihd.net/pdf/en_GC.pdf

SIGNS OF THE END OF THE WORLD

When the disciples asked Jesus about the destruction of Jerusalem, they also asked two other questions at the same time. Matthew 24:3 records that they said, “*When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*” (Matthew 24:3).

To Jesus’ disciples, it seemed that the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple must be the end of the world. Had Jesus explained everything in detail to them at that time, their hearts would have broken with sorrow. Instead, Jesus gave a dual prophecy, that is, one with two applications. As we have seen, His words pinpointed what was to happen at the destruction of Jerusalem, forty years later, in AD70. But this prophecy has a wider meaning. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD70 is a miniature version, a symbol, of the global annihilation that will happen just before Jesus’ second coming.

Jesus’ use of the destruction of Jerusalem to

represent the destruction of the world is not the Bible's only use of a historical event to illustrate the final end of all things in our world. He and other prophets also pointed to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of what our world will be like just before His second coming (Luke 17:28,29; Jude 7). The flood in Noah's day was also referred to on multiple occasions as a symbol of the end of the world (Luke 17:26,27; 2 Peter 3:5-7). The apostle Paul, in fact wrote, "*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*" (1 Corinthians 10:11). The word "ensamples" here can also be translated "types", which means symbols. This verse shows that the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers to record those truths which God knew those of us living right before the second coming of Jesus would need, in order to be prepared to meet Him on that great and solemn day. Because Jerusalem was destroyed, just as Jesus foretold, we can be sure that the same doom awaits our world. *But*—and this is the good news—just as

God preserved His people during that crisis, He will again save His followers in the greater, global destruction of our entire planet.

Over the thousands of years since it was written, many people have tried to destroy the Bible. But God raised up noble men and women to stand in defence of His word, to preserve the Bible and its truths, many times at the cost of their lives. With what value, then, should we regard it? Let's explore more deeply the precious gems of wisdom it contains, and what Jesus said to His disciples that day, as He unveiled the future.

We have already seen that Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, a statement which, in those times, would have made Him appear to have completely lost all reason. Yet the very fact that Jesus predicted such an unlikely, unwelcome event, which is now an indisputable historical fact, shows us something significant about Bible prophecy. We looked earlier at the warnings given in the Bible against false prophets. Peter observed that,

even amongst God's people, there had been and would continue to be, false prophets (2 Peter 2:1). There are a number of examples of false prophets in both the Old and New Testaments. One of the characteristics of false prophets was that they tended to give popular messages that kings and people wanted to hear.

For example, in the days of King Ahab, he and King Jehoshaphat considered waging war against Syria. When King Ahab asked the prophets of Baal whether he would be successful in battle, they assured him that he would be. However, when King Jehoshaphat insisted that a prophet of God be called, he gave a very different message, which proved to be correct (1 Kings 31).

Again, in Jeremiah's day, there were many false prophets promising that Jerusalem would have peace (Jeremiah 28). But Jeremiah, God's true prophet, was told to say, "*They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace*" (Jeremiah

8:11). The apostle Paul took up these words in his first letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, and showed how they applied to the end of the world. In a passage where he explained the second coming, Paul foretold that those living on the Earth would then be predicting peace and safety, but that “*sudden destruction*” would come upon them instead (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

In the Bible, we find many assurances of God’s love. The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, show that God is doing all He can to draw us back to Himself (Luke 15). In giving Jesus to die for us, God poured out for us all of heaven in one Gift. How is it, then, that the Bible also contains these frightening and fearful warnings? Aren’t such doom-and-gloom statements at odds with the character of our tender, compassionate Saviour?

In fact, when rightly understood, the warnings of the Bible are in perfect harmony with God’s character of love. While the Lord is “*very pitiful*,

and of tender mercy” (James 5:11), it is this very compassion that leads Him to warn us in the strongest possible language of the sure result of disregarding His warnings. All around us in the world today, we see the results of sin. We see the agony, the devastation, that has all developed from one small transgression in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15, 16; 3:1-6). God’s plan is to rid our world, and the universe, of sin completely, because it is just so damaging and dangerous. But anyone who chooses to cling to sin will eventually become identified with it. When God finally consumes sin, all who cling to it will be destroyed at the same time. What heartache that will bring to God! The Bible speaks of a secret place that God will have throughout eternity, where He will go and weep for the lost (Jeremiah 13:17). It is because of His great love for us that God does not, cannot, speak messages of peace during times of peril.

In the devastating tsunami in Indonesia on the 26th December 2004, over 200,000 people tragically lost their lives. One of the reasons for

the tremendous loss of life was that virtually no warning was given. We install smoke detectors and other devices in our homes and offices to warn us of danger. Bible prophecies that warn of future disasters are intended for the same purpose. These prophecies are alarm bells given by God, warnings that we must pay attention to in order to save not just our life here on Earth, but to secure eternal life and joy.

When considered closely, Bible prophecy is not illogical or unreasonable. It is not just wild guesswork, without rhyme or reason. Bible prophecy is given by an organised God whose character is one of love and wisdom.

Bible prophecy is based on clear principles. God's works of creation show that He operates on cause-effect principles. That is why He has given us His laws, which are a warning against sin, with its devastating results. Bible prophets did far more than just predict the future. In fact, predictions make up only a small part of Bible prophecy, and

the work of a prophet of God. Prophets spoke messages from God, messages based on the law of God. True prophets called attention to the laws of God, and showed what would be the effect of breaking those laws. Bible prophecy really calls us to consider the rational basis for God's laws. Predictions in Bible prophecy are based around God's eternal law of love; they foretell, on the one hand, the blessings of obedience to that law and, on the other, the inevitable results of disobedience.

Bible prophecy also has a clear focus. This is brought to our attention with the phrase that opens the final book of the Bible: "*The revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Revelation 1:1). A revelation is something that is revealed. This verse tells us that Jesus is both the revealer, and the revealed, the One who opens to us the events of the future that point us to His work for us and the world. The whole Bible tells us of Jesus (John 5:39), and Bible prophecy points especially to that time when the relationship between God and His people will be restored; when they will no longer be separated

from Him, but will see Him face to face and live forever in His presence.

The Bible tells us all we need to know to obtain eternal salvation. Above all, it shows how great God's love for us is. Jesus Christ—part of the eternal Godhead, with a closer relationship to God than a son has with his father, the One who created and sustains all things—took on human nature, and subjected Himself to the cruellest of deaths, to save you and me personally (John 3:16). His hand, that guides the worlds in space, was nailed to the cross for us. God's love, power and wisdom show beyond a doubt that He is worthy of our complete trust.

And that, in fact, is the purpose of Bible prophecy: to lead us to believe, or place implicit trust in, God. On the night before His death on the cross, Jesus stated this plainly to His disciples, when He said, *"And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe"* (John 14:29).

God does not reveal everything to us, because it is part of His plan that we develop trust, or faith, in Him. We now know that without trust social relationships fall apart. It was through distrust of God that Adam and Eve were led into sin in Eden, and it is only by developing trust in God, trust demonstrated by obedience to His commands, that we can again have access to the Tree of Life (Revelation 22:14). God uses Bible prophecy to show His intimate involvement in Earth's history; that He is interested in your life, and mine.

The Bible reveals the key events to take place before the great day when Christ will return to rescue His true followers from all evil in this world. It shows that each individual who sincerely desires to, may share the glorious rewards of everlasting life, joy and peace that God offers to those who serve Him (Revelation 22:17).

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Key events before the second coming of Christ are outlined in Matthew 24:4-14. The remainder

of the chapter goes back and elaborates more details of these. Chapter 25 gives three parables, or stories, that illustrate how to prepare for the second coming. In this booklet we will focus on the overview.

After warning His disciples to be alert to deceptions (Matthew 24:4,5), Jesus continued, *“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places”* (verses 6,7). It is true that all these things have been happening on Earth for thousands of years. But Bible prophecy tells us that these will escalate just before the second coming of Christ. Look at data for any type of catastrophe, and you will find an exponential increase in recent years.

The 2019-2020 bushfires in Australia are an example of this. Following years of record-breaking drought, fires with a severity never before seen

ravaged the east coast. Seasoned firefighters, who had braved many conflagrations, found themselves overwhelmed and powerless in the face of such fierce and unprecedented conditions. The loss of biodiversity from the fires staggered scientists, being far beyond anything predicted in the coming decades. The fires were quickly followed by devastating floods, and then a pandemic which has led to a global shut-down of a scale never before seen. In turn, this pestilence has sparked a massive downturn in the global economy. As Jesus also predicted, people today are filled with “*perplexity*” (Luke 21:25,26). Everywhere they wonder what the next weeks, the next days and hours, will bring. What does the future hold?

“*All these,*” said Jesus, “*are the beginning of sorrows*” (Matthew 24:8). From environmental disasters, verse 9 then returns to discussing events in the social and political world. Notice the words carefully, “*Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.*” Verses

6 and 7 portray conflict amongst the nations. We see this happening today. But verse 9 implies that the nations will unite for an evil purpose: to persecute God's people. The prophecies of Revelation elaborate further on this (see especially Revelation 13:1-4,8,14-17; 17:12,13).

The oppression of God's people at the end of time is a continuation of the persecution that has existed against the righteous ever since Abel was murdered by his brother Cain (Genesis 4; 1 John 3). Daniel describes it as "*a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time*" (Daniel 12:1). Jeremiah calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). "*But,*" he continued, "*he shall be saved out of it.*" The words "out of it" here do not mean that God's people will not experience fiery trial and suffering. They will suffer tremendous hardship. But God will not leave them to perish. He who neither slumbers nor sleeps will watch over them at every moment. By the promises of God, His people will live.

“He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure” (Isaiah 33:16).

“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them” (Isaiah 41:17).

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:17,18).

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty... Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield

and buckler” (Psalm 91:1, 3-4).

When the protection of human laws is withdrawn from those who honour God’s law, there will be a global movement that threatens their destruction. It will be determined in one night to strike the final blow, and blot all God’s people from the earth.

The people of God—some in prison cells, some in mountains and other desolate places—will still be praying, pleading for God’s protection and for deliverance from the forces of wicked men and demons. It is at the moment of utmost extremity that God will intervene to save His people. Through the prophet Isaiah, God foretold, *“You shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept and...the LORD will cause His glorious voice to be heard, and show the descent of His arm, with the indignation of His anger and the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, tempest, and hailstones” (Isaiah 30:29,30).*

As evil men are about to rush upon their prey, a

dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, will fall upon the earth. From the throne in heaven, God's voice like the sound of many waters will be heard, saying, "*It is done*" (Revelation 16:17).

That voice will shake the heavens and the earth. There will be a mighty earthquake, "*such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great*" (Revelation 16:18). The skies will appear to open and shut. The glory from God's throne will flash through. The mountains will shake like reeds in the wind, while ragged rocks are scattered on every side. The whole surface of the earth will heave and swell like the waves of the sea. Its very foundations will seem to be giving way. The proudest cities of the earth will be reduced to rubble. Prison walls will be torn apart, and God's people who have been imprisoned for their faith, will be set free.

Soon there will appear in the sky a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. This

cloud surrounds the Saviour, and God's people will recognise this as the sign of His coming. As the cloud draws nearer to the earth, it will appear brighter and brighter, more and more glorious. With all His angels, *"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"*, Christ will appear, until the whole sky seems filled with their brightness. Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roll of thunder, Christ will call to life all His faithful children who have been sleeping in the grave. From the prison house of death they will come, clothed with immortal glory, crying, *"Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?"* (1 Corinthians 15:55). And the living righteous, glorified in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, will unite with them in a long, joyous song of victory. Together, all will rise from the earth to meet Christ in the air. *"And so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:17, ESV).*

What a day that will be! Friend, do you long to be a part of it? You can be. Today, Christ is calling,

calling to you. His message to those living today, in the final days of Earth's history, is, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*" (Revelation 3:20).

The Bible reveals that the disasters we see today are signs that the end of Earth's history is not far away. While those who reject God's mercy will be filled with fear, and unable to understand the meaning of these things (Daniel 12:10), God has a message of hope and comfort for those who choose to accept the free gift of salvation He still offers today. God's message to His people at this time is, "*When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near*" (Luke 21:28).

* For more on this, see White, E. G. 1911. *The Great Controversy*. Reprint, Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2017, pp. 495-504, 521-554. Available from https://egwwritings-a.akamaihd.net/pdf/en_GC.pdf

From this study of Bible prophecy, have you seen, as never before, that God's word is reliable? Has your heart been touched by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for you? Perhaps you have never before heard the story of God's plan to save you, and want to know more. Perhaps you have been walking with Christ for many years, but want to trust Him more fully.

If it is your desire to prepare for the greatest moment of Earth's history, the day when Jesus will return, here is a short prayer you could say: "Dear God, I see all around me the signs of Your soon return. Lord, these events make me afraid. I see from Your word that You are trustworthy. You are powerful, but You care for me personally. I believe that You sent Your Son to die for me. I choose to commit my life to Your hands. Please help me to learn more about You, and to live Your way. In Jesus' name, Amen." *

* Suggestion only. Please adapt this prayer to your personal circumstances.