



Tomorrow

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

If we truly understood the fabric of space and what holds it together, would it be of any consequence to our daily lives? Hawking, in his thesis of a 'Brief History of Time' concedes 'probably not.' Nevertheless, such knowledge is exciting to learn, and adds to our ever increasing awareness of the universe in which we live and the earth we tread upon. What lies beneath our feet and exists among the stars has been of profound interest to humans since the earth was first populated. It compels us to invention and discovery. But in this, our cosmos, and the scientific and technological developments that give us amazing theoretical insights into its creation, there exists a void of understanding that cannot be answered and will never be answered by science. And that is regarding the existence of a Creator. Did God create the earth and space?

Religion and matters of faith are, without parallel, *the* predominant issue of the 21st Century. It is quite unlikely one will scan a newspaper, magazine or online social media venue today without being exposed to confrontation, exhortations, or political agendas that invoke or provoke the name of God. Entire nations are divided by religious ideologies. Wars are fought. Terrorism in the name of God is our latest social fad dementia.

So where are we now in History?

We can calculate our trajectory through space, manipulate atoms, and build particle accelerators for the observation of 'creation' bits. We can send signals through the atmosphere that ride on photons, or build a cheeseburger out of a bean. We are hooked on knowledge and development. Economically, social media has brought to us the fairly recent concept of shopping online, a spin off from the Sears catalog days. We pay for items with our telephone, sending billions of dollars through payment apps. Instant messaging has brought together acquaintances that used to be a faded memory. Now, they are suddenly alive and in our homes asking us if we 'like' them. We receive pictures of their breakfast, their cats, their kids and travel blogs. Like the introduction of movable print 400 years prior, and the religious and socioeconomic changes it incurred, micro-chips, wireless communication, fibre-optics and smart phones are aggressively shaping the religious and political landscape of our time and how we talk, ignore, war and have sex with one another.

The question to ask now is not '*where are we going?*' but rather, '*what's coming our way next?*' Are we living in unprecedented times, or does it just seem that way to this generation? What do the next 50 years hold in store for mankind? Will our children look back to this time and remember our present world as living in the 'good old days?' Rapid changes have a way of unsettling the hearts and minds of people. As we get older, there is often a longing for the days past, when things seemed easier and less uncertain. In the book of Ecclesiastes 7:10, the writer says;

Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" For it is not wise to ask such questions.

Perhaps that is to encourage us not to look around and compare today's environment to that which is past, and can never return. It can lead to frustration and despair if we allow it. The world and all that is in it has been constantly shifting and changing since time began. To spend our days in wistful longing

for that which is past is to not take advantage of the time today, or to use it wisely and productively. That which is past is past and that which is done cannot be undone.

Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty *themselves* upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

Wherever a tree falls, there it shall be. The change in that tree is permanent and is now subject to decay or some other form of transformation. Perhaps it will be made into a chair or be used in the construction of a table, or burned in the fire to keep somebody warm or used to cook their food. We can use the tree in various forms, but we can't bring it back to life. We may understand the principles of matter, and how to manipulate it, but cannot restore that which is permanently lost or altered, at least, not in all its fullness. In the book of Genesis, we are told that through man's disobedience, the earth, and life upon the earth is now in a state of perpetual decay, much like the tree after the fall. And while we can slow down the the inevitable process, we cannot return to Eden, so to speak.

Romans 8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it.

A further rendering of that word 'futility' translates as perversity and depravity; void of truth or appropriateness. Who among us can deny that we live in a world where the cup of perversity fills daily, and spills over into our homes and families through social media and TV, and into our places of work, our relationships or our interactions with strangers on the street. All of creation is touched, and none is exempt. In this present condition, we are *all* suffering, to one degree or another. And we will all decay. Though we plaster ourselves with makeup, and lift a little here, and tuck a little there, there is no denying it. An unalterable decay has been set in motion. From the day we are born, right up until the time of our death, our body is in constant change, and we are born to die. The world, and those in it, are subject to it on a daily basis. The years slip by, and before we know it, we are old. It happens sooner than we can even imagine. It is the one great surprise of life, how fleeting time really is. And the world, and those in it are passing away. The bible says that even the stars are affected.

Isaiah 34:4

All the stars of heaven will be dissolved. The skies will be rolled up like a scroll, and all their stars will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like foliage from the fig tree.

Prophecy of a Better Hope

Were it not for the promise and hope of something better, we would all have reason to despair. Indeed, the bible clearly states that God will one day introduce a new heaven and a new earth.

Revelation 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

So while the earth, and those in it are subject to decay, the bible makes it plain that this condition is only temporary. And for the believer, while still subject to the same griefs, troubles, pains and problems of this present life, there is something else to look forward to. While some may scoff at this, is it really unthinkable? Do prophecies from the book of scriptures commonly referred to as the "Bible", have any place in our world of science and just how accurate and reliable is something



written 2000 years, especially considering the breadth of knowledge now in man's possession? Is it a book of facts or just myths created in the same way that all myths are created; through oral and written repetition for the purpose of answering questions such as; Where did we come from? Where are we going? And who or what controls earth and mankind upon the earth? What are myths anyway, and how do they differ from what is termed 'prophecy' in the bible?

Myths and Legends

"God made man, because he liked to hear a story." So say the Africans, and the rich variety of worldwide mythology proves that God chose wisely!

Myths are stories that are based on tradition. Some may have factual origins, while others are completely fictional. But myths are more than mere stories and they serve a more profound purpose in ancient and modern cultures. Myths are sacred tales that explain the world and man's experience. Myths are as relevant to us today as they were to the ancients. Myths answer timeless questions and serve as a compass to each generation. The myths of lost paradise, for example, give people hope that by living a virtuous life, they can earn a better life in the hereafter. The myths of a golden age give people hope that there are great leaders who will improve their lives. The hero's quest is a model for young men and women to follow, as they accept adult responsibilities. Some myths simply reassure, such as myths that explain natural phenomena as the actions of gods, rather than arbitrary events of nature.

The subjects of myths reflect the universal concerns of mankind throughout history: birth, death, the afterlife, the origin of man and the world, good and evil and the nature of man himself. A myth taps into a universal cultural narrative, the collective wisdom of man. **Source: PBS.org**

Prophecy differs from myth in that it foretells future events by revealing that which is 'hidden' to mankind; ie - the future. In Revelation 19:10 we read that '*the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*'. Throughout the bible, we are told that prophets spoke from divine inspiration to declare the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, comforting the afflicted, or revealing certain events to come. In several of these prophecies, the most lucid being found in the book of Isaiah, chapter 53, we read a description of a coming Messiah, who is to take away the sins of the world.

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. **4** Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **5** But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. **6** All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. **7** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. **8** He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

To this day, orthodox Jews around the world still await his arrival. For Christians, these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts, chapter 8, we read how Phillip was led to join himself with a man reading these parts of scripture while sitting upon his chariot.

Acts 8:26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." **27** So he started out, and on his way he met an

Ethiopian[a] eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. **29** The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” **30** Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. **31** “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. **33** In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.”

34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” **35** Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

This is the meaning behind the phrase 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy', for all true prophecy is meant to lead us back to Christ, and is the essential difference between these two terms; *myth* and *prophecy*. If all prophecy were taken out of the bible, then indeed, most of the stories remaining could justifiably be called 'myths', as there would be no indication that they were otherwise. Almost every culture throughout the history of mankind tell stories of the flood, the battle between good and evil, the creation of the earth, and the relationship between the divine and the natural.

If myths are used as a collective narrative to provide a general compass for mankind, as we read previously, what then is the true purpose of prophecy? How accurate is it? And does prophecy hold any relevance for us today?

Understanding Prophecy

To understand prophecy, we must first understand how it is used in scripture. The Apostles often used prophecy in their messages, as a way of telling people about Jesus. Jesus often referred to prophecy as well. He showed the Jews the purpose of His arrival through prophecies that had been written.

Luke 4:16 He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. **17** And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, **19** To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. **21** And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus again and again referred His listeners back to what was written about Himself in scripture, as a way of showing that the claims He made about Himself, were true. The religious authorities also used prophecy as a way to test Jesus claims, but only to a limited degree and only that which suited their refusal to believe in Him.

John 7:52 They answered and said to him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.”

If they had looked a little further into the life of Jesus, they would have known that in fact, it was not Galilee (his present hometown), where He was born, but rather, Bethlehem as the scriptures had foretold.

Micah 5: 2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Matthew 2: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem **2** and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

The Jews had already made up their minds. And once a person makes up their mind, and finalizes it in their heart, very few things will convince them otherwise, even though the evidence is plain before their eyes. Passages of scripture were read every sabbath. Still, they missed the point of those scriptures; to lead them to the Messiah. Jesus says to them;

John 5:39-40 You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me. **40** yet you refuse to come to Me to have life....

John 4:46 If you had believed Moses, you would believe Me, because he wrote about Me. **47** But since you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?”

Prophecy and the Disciples

To bring the point home to His disciples, Jesus used prophecy and taught His disciples that He would be killed, buried, and would rise again on the third day.

Matthew 16:21 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, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

He reminded them of those prophecies during that critical moment in the garden the night before His crucifixion. The soldiers had just arrived to place Him under arrest.

Matthew 26:51 With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. **52** “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. **53** Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? **54** But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

The book of Isaiah, which we looked at earlier, describes the beating He took, and the reason for it. There are several prophecies in the Old Testament that describe the pulling out of His beard, the whipping, the slander and the crucifixion. After a long, torturous night, that sees the pouring out of His blood, Jesus succumbs to death on the cross. It is without doubt, a gruesome spectacle. And yet, for all of this, the scriptures say;

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The joy set before Him. What a glorious testimony to know that in the midst of suffering, the redemption of you and I was uppermost in Jesus' mind, and that through His death, we might have eternal life.

After His resurrection, whereby God raised Him from the dead after three days in the tomb, He met two disciples walking on the road discussing the recent events. Jesus drew near to them and walked with them. The bible says that the disciples were sad and gloomy. Like many, they did not understand the purpose of the cross, and why Jesus had to die. They thought perhaps that Jesus was going to rescue Israel from foreign powers. They didn't realize that He *came to set the captive free*, and to release men and women from the power of sin instead.

Luke 24:13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. **14** They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. **15** As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; **16** but they were kept from recognizing him. **17** He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. **18** One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. **20** The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; **21** but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. **22** In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning **23** but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. **24** Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

For this reason, John later wrote; The word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the only begotten of the Father. And again, 'For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.' In plain language, Jesus spoke to many of His day. And He still speaks the same thing to you and I today.

John 8: 23 Then He told them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. **24** That is why I told you that you would die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

25 "Who are You?" they asked. "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning," Jesus replied....

The Purpose of Prophecy

God used prophecy to introduce His son. Jesus used it, to show the disciples His life, death, and resurrection, and to remind the religious leaders what the scriptures were really about. Peter used it on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended, to explain to those nearby what was happening. (Acts 2:14) Paul often referred to prophecy while testifying before rulers and also in his letters to the churches. In the book of Matthew in the New Testament, the term '*that it might be fulfilled*' is frequently used while describing certain events in the life of Jesus. Again and again, God reminds us of what was written beforehand, so that through believing, we might have life in His name.

John 3:17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Acts 10:43 All the prophets testify of Him, that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.

This is the purpose of prophecy, and the reason Jesus came into the world. That through Him, we may receive forgiveness of sins, and have eternal life.

John 20: 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

In all of these instances, what was written beforehand in the scriptures, were and still are, meant to direct our attention towards Christ and the offer of salvation found in Him. This is the most important point of all prophecy.

State of the World in Prophecy

God still uses prophecy today, to warn us of things to come so that we are not taken unaware. He doesn't give us specific dates, but He does give us signs to watch for. In Matthew chapter 24, the disciples asked Jesus what the signs of His return would be, and of the end of the world. Jesus tells it to them straight. And it doesn't sound very pleasant. In spite of what we hope for, that things will get better, troublesome conditions upon the earth will increase in frequency and severity right up until the time of His appearing. We are witnessing some of those troubles now.

Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Take heed that no man deceive you.** **5** For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. **6** And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. **7** For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. **10** And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. **11** And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. **12** And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. **14** And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

The Lord goes onto to explain to the disciples what will take place in Jerusalem at that time also. Many of these parts are hard to understand, and there is some speculation as to exactly what He meant. We *do* know that it will be a time of great tribulation, unlike anything the world has seen before, or will ever see again.

Matthew 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

It doesn't sound like a very pleasant place. No doubt, we will continue to experience beauty, and for the believer, there is still the 'joy of the Lord', that sustains the soul during troublesome times. But for many people, conditions upon the earth will add to an increase in fear and bewilderment. Nevertheless, in spite of such things, Jesus says that life will go on pretty much as it always has in the past.

37 But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. **38** For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, **39** And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

While it is not wise for us to speculate on the exact hour of His return, (as many have tried to do in the past) it *is* wise to consider that prior to His return, there will be signs indicating the time of His arrival is close at hand.

Matthew 24:33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, *even* at the doors.

Matthew 24:43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. **44** Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh,,

The State of People in Prophecy

While Matthew 24 gives us a general overview of world conditions prior to the return of Christ, the Apostle Paul in his letter to a young pastor named Timothy, is even more specific regarding the state of people's hearts.

2 Timothy 3:1 (NLT) **1**You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. **2**For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. **3**They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. **4**They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. **5**They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!

Paul is warning young Timothy to be mindful of his associations, and to be aware that not everyone who professes a belief in God is genuine. It is a reminder to us as well, to be aware that sin is progressive, as described here in verse 13 of the same chapter;

2 Timothy 2:13 ...evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

That word 'waxing' is the same as when a piece of steel is heated in the fire, and through repeated blows of the hammer, it flattens, stretches and broadens out in its reach. It's not a sudden occurrence, but happens gradually. Seduction and deception doesn't come with a trumpet. It comes with a lie dressed in white robes, speaking 'justice', 'truth' and your 'rights'. It tells you to stand up, take a hold of those things that belong to you and let no man stand in your way. Just *one* viral video, no more than 30 seconds in length, has the ability to shape and move the entire world. Whether the content is someone's individual tragedy, a new dance craze, a Presidential 'tweet' or perhaps even a comment by a local celebrity, just *one* post can affect millions, shape their behavior and set off a chain of events resulting in hundreds of thousands of people pouring into the streets to protest, dance or throw ice on each other. That is the power of 'free-flow' information today. It is a hammer in the heat of conflict that shapes our collective consciousnesses.

Daniel 12: 4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

As if waiting a minute or two for a ninety minute movie to download is too long, we have now introduced even faster broadband capabilities, with the capacity for *libraries* of information in the blink of an eye. One of the reasons countries such as China establish firewalls and maintain some form of control over the internet is to hinder the flow of unfiltered information. But who is to be the judge of such matters? China? The US? We are not to judge others by our own standards, but we *are* told, as individuals, to be mindful and cautious and to be discerning. *Let no man deceive you*. Troublesome times require cautious living and a deep consideration of our environment at all times. The information we receive through broadcasts, social media, in our interactions with others, *and* in our churches, need to be weighed carefully in the light of God's word. Charles Spurgeon, that great Baptist preacher from 19th century England said it best;

“Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between right and wrong; rather it is telling the difference between right and almost right.”

Prosperity and Prophecy

Almost right. That is seduction. A blatant lie will usually stand out from the crowd. But seduction blends right in. It appears dressed in nice clothes not unlike our own, speaks smooth flattering words, and inflames our desires in order to achieve its own end.

One of the reasons 'prosperity' preachers are so popular today is because the message appeals to our basic desires for freedom and money. They are charming, have winning smiles and promise liberty, breakthrough, freedom from your enemies and all manner of '*pending blessings*.' We are encouraged to give so that what is given will be returned to us with greater abundance. It is seduction at the highest levels, because it uses the word of God as its primary tool. Who doesn't want to be rich, free from oppression, healthy, and never have to worry about money again, or how the mortgage is going to be paid this month? It is a powerful message. And it is gaining in popularity.

As we read in 2 Timothy; *that in the last days there will be very difficult times. 2For people will love only themselves and their money*. This doesn't mean that *all* people will find themselves in this position, but a vast majority of society will be focused mainly on achieving individual personal gain, with little regard for the needs of others. If we were to ask a certain rich person, 'how much money is enough?', the answer might be; *just a little bit more*. That is covetousness. It is an excessive desire for more than we need for personal use. We may also define it as '*greed*', for there is little difference between the two in matters of the heart. Jesus warns us to be on guard against such things.

Luke 12:15 And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

In the bible, covetousness is the same as idolatry because it puts money and substance before God in our life. Anything that comes before God is an idol when it becomes the primary object of our devotion and energy. God reserves this right to Himself. In fact, it is the first commandment given in the bible.

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me

Some may say that seems rather selfish of God. But is it? Assuming you are married and you went to your spouse tonight and said; “I really love you honey, but I love the FedEx delivery person *more*”, how do you suppose that would affect your primary relationship, especially if you weren't even getting a discount? There would be friction. There will always be some friction in any earthly marriage or relationship in which we happen to find ourselves, whether through friendship, business or otherwise.

But *willful* friction is a rebellion against the basic foundation of all partnerships; trust. In Matthew, chapter 6, Jesus talks about the issue of trust with His disciples.

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?[a] **28** And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

34 “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.

Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

This is not a call to abandon all common sense and reason. Rather, it is an admonition to us to remember we are not alone in this world, and that God cares for His creation. Wealth, by itself, is not a sin. There are many in the bible who were wealthy, and loved the Lord with all their heart, mind and soul. Living a life of poverty doesn't bring us any closer to heaven. And accumulating great wealth, if that is our talent, isn't evil either. God knows what is in the heart of every person. We are told to be wise with the resources entrusted to us by Him, and to practice charity as well.

1 Timothy 6:17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

18 Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others.

19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

The bible speaks a lot about money, because it is so near to the heart of everyone. It takes considerable discipline not to allow ourselves to be overwhelmed with the cares of this life, and to trust in God *who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy*. There are consequences to misguided devotion.

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

An entire book may be written on this subject, and many have been written. It is enough for us to know, for the purpose of prophecy, that as times grow more uncertain, more people will look to money and wealth as their security, and not unto the living God.

Fables, Myths and False Doctrine

Fables, myths, and false doctrine all come from the same source; the imagination of the heart. And while they may have some entertainment value and perhaps some principles of truth within, they do not provide the power and witness of the Holy Spirit to deliver a soul from the power of darkness, into the

kingdom of light. It is deception to claim otherwise. The scriptures make very plain that we are to be on the alert, and to be watchful against false doctrine and seducing spirits that creep into local assemblies and subvert entire congregations. It will be a challenge for ministers not to compromise on the word of truth, as they see numbers of people leaving to join other assemblies to listen to a gospel that tickles the ears.

The bible doesn't say that people won't *listen* to sound doctrine. Rather, it says that they won't *endure* it, because the true gospel requires discipline, while a false doctrine appeals to the senses and has a comforting allure to it. The true gospel says that in order to find your life, you must first lose it. And the false gospel states that you simply need to be aware of your own potential. There is right, and there is *almost* right. Knowing the difference will be the single greatest challenge to face believers in the last days. Ministers also need to be alert that what they are preaching is of God. For some speak unaware.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. **3** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; **4** And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, although I made every effort to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt it necessary to write and urge you to contend earnestly for the faith entrusted once for all to the saints. **4** For certain men have crept in among you unnoticed—ungodly ones who were designated long ago for condemnation. They turn the grace of our God into a license for immorality, and they deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ....

Romans 16:18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

2 Peter 2:2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. **3** In their greed, these false teachers will exploit you with deceptive words....

2Peter 2:18 With lofty but empty words, they appeal to the sensual passions of the flesh and entice those who are just escaping from others who live in error.

2 Peter 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

Much of what is known as 'prophecy' today, specifically, the declaration of the tongue that God shall do such and such a thing, and by a certain date isn't prophecy. God is under no obligation to fulfill the words of any persons who speak a word, even though it is spoken through what they call 'faith'. Prophecy is not for the purpose of personal financial gain or 'breakthrough'. It is not used to defeat our 'enemies' or promote vain assumptions.

Prophecy is used to declare the purposes and plan of an Almighty God that are otherwise hidden, to exhort believers, to warn the unruly, and to be a forerunner to the revelation of Jesus Christ. True prophecy will go forward, whether it is believed upon or not. It is not up to us to create the environment. The conditions for prophecy to be fulfilled do not require the agreement of man or woman. We may agree together in prayer, as touching anything on earth, but God alone reserves the right to declare the end from the beginning. Those who abuse His gift, may very well find themselves on the receiving end of it. Indeed, the life of Christ was one of opposition, and those who opposed Him, and tried to silence Him, found themselves fulfilling the very words He had spoken.

Matthew 2:16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.

17 Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: **18** “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.”

True prophecy will happen, whether we believe it or not. You may cut down the prophets, and crucify God's only Son, but the word of God stands true.

Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Regardless of our stand on it, and whether we are a believer or not, that which is written will come to pass as a lesson to us that God is in total control of the affairs of men. Judas, one of the original disciples learned this the hard way. Having 'sold' Jesus out to His enemies for some thirty pieces of silver, and discovering Jesus had been condemned to death in the subsequent trial that followed, Judas attempts to return the money to the chief priests.

Matthew 27: 4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. **5** And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. **7** And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. **9** *Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;* **10** And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

Was Judas aware when he took the silver that it was the exact amount the prophet said it would be? Did he ponder it in his heart, and wonder if it was just a 'coincidence'? We'll never know. What a tragic ending for Judas. True prophecy, will always come to pass. There is nothing in the word of God that states a man or woman must create the conditions, either by way of declaration, prayer or through the power of belief. Clearly, both Judas and Herod were acting contrary to faith, and in the end did exactly what the scriptures foretold.

Signs and Wonders

In the bible, 'deception' in the last days seems to be number one on the list of issues we are to be aware of and avoid. As we read previously in Matthew 24:3, the first warning Jesus gave to His disciples was about deception; and he repeats it again in verses 23-25; to be watchful, and not allow ourselves to be taken in by the remarkable. We are not to base our beliefs solely on 'miracles' and spectacular shows that thrill and amaze. The magicians in Pharaoh's court were able to replicate at least *some* of the miracles God did through Moses, so it is not unusual to think the same thing can happen again in our time.

Matthew:24.23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. **24** For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. **25** Behold, I have told you before..

These are not idle warnings. There are literally *dozens* of men (and in some cases, women) around the world who claim to be Jesus Christ in the flesh and amass followers that number well up into the

thousands. These '*messiahs*' are not the harmless souls you see standing on street corners, wearing white robes and shouting "I am Jesus" to nervous passerby's. Often, these self-proclaimed messiahs are highly organized individuals with corporate status, meeting halls, natural resorts and in some cases, entire compounds built on privately owned land where they continue to indoctrinate, and in many cases, exercise total control over even the most intimate and minute details of their followers lives.

False Christs, 'fake news', racial agenda's, sexual gender, flat-earth claims, UFO's and whether or not we are living in a computer simulation are just a *few* of the topics discussed and widely reported on in social media links. We like to think we cannot be fooled, that we are 'wise', but history has shown time and time again we are all susceptible to lies. Imagine what it will be like when lies are accompanied with *great signs and wonders*, as Jesus said. How will people make sense of the times with no reference points for a guide?

In the book of Daniel (the same book Jesus quoted from back in Matthew 25:15), we read;

Daniel 12:10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

In this passage, an angel of the Lord is speaking with Daniel and telling him of things that will come upon the earth in the final chapters of history. We can read about it in the book of Daniel in the old testament, beginning at chapter 10. Conditions will try people's faith. Like precious gold in a fire, trials refine us and burn out the impurities. Perhaps the 'white' in this passage represents garments as described in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 3:5 (NKJV) - He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Jesus is speaking, telling believers that their names are written down in heaven, and that He is '*not ashamed to call them brethren.*' (*Hebrews 2:11*) It is comforting to know that the trials and tribulations of this present life are only for a season, and that there is great reward in keeping our faith right up until the end. The Apostle Paul puts his own trials into perspective in his letter to the church in Rome.

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be* compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The 'white' may also be a reference to the washing away of sins, as shown in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Unfortunately, as it was in the days of Noah before the flood, many will not recognize the times and continue to live as if nothing ever changes, and that no change is required. The truth of God's word will not be understood because it has been rejected. And so, for many, the book will remain sealed.

vs. 4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even* to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

We will build faster computers, increase download capacities, and through the ever expanding internet of things, disseminate knowledge as never before. *Knowledge shall be increased.* We may *heap teachers to ourselves*, and fill up our hard-drives but if it doesn't lead us to the truth, then it is a vain game indeed.

Will we Recognize the Signs?

John 14: 1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God ^a; believe also in me. **2** My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4** You know the way to the place where I am going.”

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus answered, “**I am the way and the truth and the life.**

Will it be as it was when Jesus first came to His people, and told them '*this day, these words are fulfilled in your hearing?*' Will we recognize the time of His appearing?

Matthew 16:1 Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came and tested Jesus by asking Him to show them a sign from heaven. **2** But He replied, “**When evening** comes, you say, ‘The weather will be fair, for the sky is red,’ **3** and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but not the signs of the times....

The wise shall understand.

The bible says that 'the fear of the Lord (that is, respect and reverence for His name), is the beginning of wisdom.' And through fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. Wisdom is also the key to understanding and recognizing the Lord's work upon the earth. Without wisdom, we only have knowledge. And knowledge without the fear of the Lord, still leaves us depending upon our own resources to improve the situation. Will it get any better we ask?

Psalms 4:6 *There are many who say, “Who will show us any good?” LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.*

We may gather together in meetings around the world, and work together for common solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems. And rightly so. We should be doing all we can to turn back some of the consequences of our own actions. By addressing disease, climate change, education, inequality and several other key components, we have taken steps to correct, to a certain degree, problems of a serious nature. Left unchecked, we are certain to experience rising levels of discomfort and instability. That which requires improvement and development, and is in the power of our own hands, we should work to improve. Nevertheless, the sheer *magnitude* of problems, and the accompanying stress will try even the strongest among us in what the bible calls, '*the last days*'.

Luke 21: 25 There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among the nations, bewildered by the roaring of the sea and the surging of the waves. **26** Men will faint from fear and anxiety over what is coming upon the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Climate change is now one of the earth's most pressing concerns. As of this writing, entire communities in Europe are under water, and several cities in China are experiencing floods at unprecedented levels. Hundreds of thousands of people are displaced, and many have lost their lives. These 'natural' occurrences are bound to increase in size and frequency as earth's surface temperature increases and water cycles are disrupted. We may understand *how* things are happening, and in some cases, *why* they are happening, but time is running out for some communities. As the oceans heat and expand, sea levels inevitably rise hindering the proper flow of streams and rivers that empty themselves in the ocean. The

melting of polar ice caps further compounds the problem. A rise of just *one* centimeter in ocean levels brings with it the potential for flooding in coastal regions around the globe. That number is expected to reach *17 times* that in the next few decades, based on the most conservative estimates to date.¹ With hundreds of millions living in communities and cities near coastal regions on every corner of our planet, the potential impact of flooding cannot be underestimated. Indeed, it will leave many *bewildered*, and the nations of the earth *in dismay* as they grapple to understand what is coming upon the earth, and what can be done about it.

Terrorism and Prophecy

With the rise of terrorist activity, most notably since the beginning of the new millennium, “Peace and Security” has been on the lips of world leader's and is one of four *official* mandates of the United Nations.⁽²⁾ As a branch of the United Nations, the UN Security Council has the primary responsibility, under the United Nations Charter, for *the maintenance of international peace and security*. Today, more than ever, the nations of the world are crying after 'peace and security'. The bible states:

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

It would be hard for any of us to deny that are now living in perilous times. And none of us are guaranteed tomorrow. While we hope to live long productive lives well into our nineties and beyond, the bible says that human life is no more than a vapor that rises in the morning, and by noon-day has passed away. How many souls awoke today, only to discover it was their last day upon earth? No time to say goodbye. No time to make things right. Like fish caught in a net, or a bird caught in a snare, the hour came, and it came without warning or calling.

Will Jesus return in our lifetime? Nobody knows. It is known only by God the day or the hour of Christ's return. It was not given to us. The more important issue is, in the light of what we *do* know and have been shown, is whether or not we believe Jesus is who He said He is. For as in all matters of faith, and prophecy, the most important one has been and always will be - salvation.

2 Peter 3: 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Corinthians 6:1 As God's fellow workers, then, we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. **2** For He says: “In the time of favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” Behold, now is the time of favor; now is the day of salvation!

Today, is the day of salvation. Right now, is your opportunity, even as you are reading this. If you have not yet received the gift of eternal life, through the forgiveness of sins, I urge you do so. You may use this simple prayer to guide you.

Lord Jesus, I admit I am a sinner. I ask you for forgiveness, and that you will come into my heart and soul and life as my Lord and Savior. Thank you for your death on the cross, and for the new life you have given to me through belief in your name. Amen.

If you have prayed that prayer sincerely from your heart, you are now a citizen of Heaven, and part of the kingdom of God.

How amazing is that !

Prophecy tells us what will be in the future, and the state of man upon the earth just prior to the return of Jesus, and also the conditions on earth at that time. So where are we now in the history of mankind? Are we truly living the last days as so many claim? God alone knows the answer to that question. Some say 'yes' , and others don't believe. And there will always be skeptics, right up until the time of the end.

2 Peter 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:**2** That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,**4** And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. **5** For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: **6** Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: **7** But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Let us bear in mind the words of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, *Hebrews 12:2 who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God the Father in Heaven.*

Matthew 24:7 But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. **38** For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,**39** And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. **41** Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. **42** Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Let us hear the conclusion of the matter.

Revelation 22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, **Surely I come quickly.** Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

References:

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/11/polar-ice-caps-melting-six-times-faster-than-in-1990s>
2. The Security Council of the UN, The United Nations Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, charged with ensuring international peace and security, recommending the admission of new UN members to the General Assembly, and approving any changes to the UN Charter.

