

Scriptural Prophecies

'We have the sure word of prophecy and you do well to heed it like a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns, and the morning star arises in your hearts. Know this first, no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation for no true prophecy ever came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:19 to 21).

Sometimes understanding prophecies can be very confusing because the Lord often gives us only part of each event in prophecy, and the prophecies are not always in sequence of how the events eventually occur. Sometimes prophecies are scattered into fragments in different places throughout the Bible. Sometimes one verse can have two prophecies regarding events that will occur many years apart, like the 'former' and 'latter rains' (Joel 2:23) that happened 2,000 years apart. Most prophecies are only understood after the prophesied event has taken place. To understand Bible prophecy, we need to compare one with another. Most of the Bible prophecies have already been fulfilled and some may have two or three fulfillments. An example of this is the prophecies that tell us the Jews will return to their homeland. That is currently being fulfilled for at least the third time. God reveals to us what will happen to give us an idea of other incidences surrounding the event, but He never gives us exact dates.

The Jewish calendar has been used for thousands of years, but the Lord did not say, "My Son, your Messiah will come in the Jewish year of 3760 in the seventh month before Yom Kippur, and He will be crucified just after Passover 33½ years later." God said no such thing. Instead He gave hundreds of Messianic prophecies scattered throughout the Old Testament, some so vague they only allude to the Messiah, some were mixed in with other verses, some seemed to relate to various Biblical characters and some were brilliantly clear and filled with exact details, but the exact time was never clearly stated and had to be worked out by dedicated Jewish people. Although there were hundreds of Messianic prophecies, only a few people were able to work out when the Messiah was coming and were looking for Him. 'Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, looking for the Consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah' (Luke 2:25 & 26). 'There was a woman named Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years and she had been a widow for about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and petitions night and day. Coming up at that very hour, she gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Jesus to all those who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem' (Luke 2:36 to 38).

The closest the Lord came to giving an exact date for the first coming of Jesus was in a prophecy spoken by the messenger angel Gabriel and recorded by Daniel. For the Messiah to come to Israel as the King of the Jews, the Anointed Most Holy One Who was sent to bring eternal righteousness, the promised land of Israel had to be a flourishing country filled with Jewish people with their own pure language (Hebrew), the Jewish customs, laws and religious beliefs, a temple, synagogues and everything else Jewish (Daniel 9:24). Nehemiah and Ezra took forty-six years to rebuild the temple (John 2:20) after seventy years of exile (Jeremiah 25:11; Daniel 9:2 & 24). The land of Israel was secured for the Jewish people after the war of the Maccabees about 140 years before Jesus was born, expelling most of the Greeks. The Romans came and caused trouble but Israel was still filled with Jewish people. Then the prophecy given by Daniel was fulfilled. 'Understand and discern, from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to (coming of) the Anointed One, the Prince (Jesus), will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (69 years). Jerusalem will be built again with street and moat, even in troubled times (because of the Greeks then the Romans). After the sixty-two weeks the Anointed One (Jesus) will be cut off (crucified) and will have nothing (Jesus owned nothing). The people of the (ungodly Roman) prince who will come (the Roman Emperors Nero and Titus) will destroy the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (the temple) and its end will be with a flood (not of water but a flood of violent destruction) and even to the end there will be war, and desolations are determined (many Jewish people were murdered and thousands more forced out of Israel to be scattered worldwide)' (Daniel 9:25 to 27). These verses tell us Jerusalem would be rebuilt to accommodate the first coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Prince then after He came, Jerusalem would be destroyed again by an ungodly 'prince' – the Roman emperor.

The reason God allowed the second temple to be destroyed was because the majority of the Jewish people in Israel at the time Jesus came, rejected their Messiah, even after hundreds of prophecies. First He closed the spiritual eyes of the complacent ones then He judged them very harshly. In a display of open and exact prophecy, Jesus rode a colt into Jerusalem to fulfil the prophecy, 'Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King comes to you! He is righteous and having salvation, meek and

riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey' (Zechariah 9:9). 'The disciples brought the colt to Jesus. They threw their cloaks on the colt and set Jesus on them. As he went they spread their cloaks in the way. As He was getting near to the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees from the multitude said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" He answered them, "I tell you, if these people were silent the stones would cry out." When He drew near Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it saying, "If you people here had understood today, the things which belong to your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. The days will come on you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, surround you, hem you in on every side and will dash you and your children within you to the ground. They will not leave in you one stone on another because you did not understand (accept as truth) the time of your Visitation" (Luke 19:35 to 44).

There are many prophecies giving us details regarding the Messiah's second coming so we can read the 'signs'. We know what happened to people who rejected Jesus' first coming so woe to the people who do not accept Him the second time! The Bible is the only sacred Book of Scripture and Prophecy to have mentioned a return or Second Coming of the Messiah. Any other false religion that repeats this in their own so-called 'holy book' comes from a false prophet and a false religion. God has kept the day of the return of Jesus a secret, even from Jesus Himself while He was on earth. 'Of that exact day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son but only the Father ... Watch therefore, for you do not know in what day your Lord is coming' (Matthew 24:36 & 42). Since the time of Jesus' return is so close we can assume the Father has revealed the correct date to Jesus by now.

There are hundreds prophecies regarding the first coming of Jesus, His place of birth, His ministry, His torture and death scattered throughout the Old Testament. There are prophecies regarding the time after He came concerning the New Covenant written in His blood. There are prophecies regarding the early church, the decline of the church and the restoration of the church just before Jesus comes again. There are prophecies regarding the restoration of Israel as a nation. Prophecies tell us about life during the one thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth with His people, both Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Him as their Messiah. There are ancient prophecies regarding the final Gog and Magog war (Ezekiel 38:2 & 3) that will not happen until the end of the thousand-year reign (Revelation 20:7 & 8). There are prophecies regarding the final, total destruction of this planet earth, along with prophecies regarding what will happen to all of those who have rejected Jesus as their Messiah and most wonderfully of all, the prophecies telling us about our new immortal bodies and our wonderful new lives on the newly created heavens and the newly created earth untainted by sin created specifically for all the people who have loved Jesus and endured to the end with Him (2 Peter 3:7 to 13).

Most prophecies regarding Jesus are a 'one off', given for a specific event in His life at the God-chosen times but they are not in sequence. The New Testament gives us many examples of fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, especially surrounding the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus Himself quoted prophecies He fulfilled. There are also historical facts that have been written down and recorded regarding events that happened after the New Testament was completed. History needs to be considered when seeking out the fulfilment of some prophecies. Three vague, scattered prophecies that were fulfilled at the birth of Jesus were the three regarding from where the Messiah would come. The Bible does not record them in sequence of how they occurred and the prophecies were not understood until after Jesus was born. 'There will come forth a Shoot out of the stock of Jesse. A Branch (Nazarene) out of his roots (Jesse's family line) will grow and bear fruit' (Isaiah 11:1). 'When Israel (Jacob) was a child I loved him and called My Son out of Egypt' (Hosea 11:1). 'You Bethlehem, you are little among the clans of Judah. Out of you will One come forth for Me Who is to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from ancient days' (Micah 5:2). This is the sequence of events that fulfilled those three prophecies. 'Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod' (Matthew 2:1). 'They (Jesus, Mary and Joseph) remained there (in Egypt) until Herod's death. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son"' (Matthew 2:15). 'He (Jesus) went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth so what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He (Jesus) will be called a Nazarene (Branch)"' (Matthew 2:23).

We will look examples of non-sequential fulfilled prophecies along with a few historical facts. If we study Zechariah chapter 12, we will be able to see the prophecies that have been fulfilled and others that obviously have not yet been fulfilled but the sequence of the prophecies are for various times in history. The verses in Zechariah 12:10 & 11 were written for about 30 AD when Jesus was killed, was resurrected then the Spirit of Grace, the Holy Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem on the day of Shavuot (Pentecost). The verses in

Zechariah 12:1 to 4 then 12 to 14 were written for about 54 AD to 72 AD when the terrible persecution was at its peak under Nero and Titus that tore families apart. Zechariah 12:5 to 9 are written for our time now, when the Lord is defending Israel against its enemies. When we compare Zechariah 12 with what has been recorded in history, we will be able to see some of Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled during the sacking of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Zechariah 12:1 to 4, 'An oracle. The Word of God concerning Israel. The Lord, Who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth and forms the Spirit of man within him says, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling to all the surrounding peoples (in the Roman Empire) and on Judah also will it be in the siege against Jerusalem." (The siege in Jerusalem began in 68 AD.) Verse 3. "It will happen in that day, I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples. All who burden themselves with it will be severely wounded and all the nations of the earth (within the Roman Empire) will be gathered together against it. In that day I will strike every horse with terror and his rider with madness, I will open My eyes on the house of Judah and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness'. Notice here, the Lord said He would smite their horses. World War One was the last time horses were used in battle in Israel but during the Roman Empire, horses were constantly used in battle. Families in Israel were torn apart, just as prophesied. 'The land will mourn, every family torn apart. The family of the house of David torn apart and their wives apart. The family of the house of Nathan torn apart and their wives apart. The family of the house of Levi torn apart and their wives apart. The family of the Shimeites torn apart and their wives apart. All the families who remain (in Jerusalem) every family torn apart and their wives apart' (Zechariah 12:12 to 14).

Jesus made statements that upheld Zechariah's prophecies so the Messianic Jews would be prepared for when it happened. 'They will hand you over to suffer persecution and put you to death and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. Many will be offended, stumble and fall away and will pursue one another with hatred ... The love of the great body will grow cold because of the increased iniquity ... when you see the abomination spoken of by the prophet Daniel standing in the Holy Place (Daniel 9:26 & 11:31), let the reader understand. Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains' (Matthew 24:9 to 16). 'They will persecute you and turn you over to the synagogues and prisons for My name sake. This will be an opportunity for you to testify ... You will be betrayed by family and friends and some of you will be put to death. You will be hated because you carry My name. When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies then understand Jerusalem's desolation has come. Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains ... alas for those who are pregnant and nursing babies in those days, for great misery and distress will come on the land ... many will fall by the sword and will be led away as captives among all nations and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles have come' (Luke 21:12 to 24). When the early believers saw Jerusalem surrounded by Romans, they were prepared and most fled to mountains and caves. Many cave walls still have the etchings of menorahs and crosses carved during the siege of Jerusalem, revealing the presence of both Jews and Christians. Just as Daniel and Jesus prophesied calling it the abomination of desolation, the temple was defiled when Roman Emperor Vespasian sacrificed a pig on the altar and tossed the pig's blood all through the temple. The sacred books of the Tenach (Old Testament) were soaked in pig's blood and fluids then burned and destroyed. As prophesied in Daniel 11:31, the burnt offerings ceased and they had to because Jesus was the final sacrificial Lamb.

There were many thousands of people who gave their lives to Jesus in the first forty years after His death, from about 30 AD when He died and rose again, until 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed. Most of the known world heard the Gospel in those early years, beginning from Jerusalem, spreading to Ethiopia in Africa (Acts 8:27), Europe (most of the Book of Acts), all of Asia (Acts 19:10) and the entire known world and every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5; Romans 1:8). To find out what happened to all those people, we need to turn to the pages of history, for most of this information is not recorded in the Bible but in history books. The New Testament was completed about 96 AD when Apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation while Emperor Domitian ruled the Roman Empire. The Gospel went to the Jews first before the Gentiles, so the early church consisted of many Jews. 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Messiah Jesus for it is the power of God to bring salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and for the Gentile' (Romans 1:16).

'I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of Grace and of supplication, and they will look to Me Whom they have pierced and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and will grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for his firstborn' (Zechariah 12:10). The Roman soldiers were the ones who whipped Jesus, taunted Him, mocked Him, forced Him to carry His cross, stole His clothing, the Romans nailed Him to the cross and it was a Roman soldier who stabbed Him with the spear that caused the gash large enough to fit a man's hand (John 20:27). The Jewish leaders may have called for Jesus to be crucified because they were jealous of Him but the Jews played no part in the actual murder of Jesus. The Roman soldiers did it all. It was the death and resurrection of Jesus that ushered in this time of history called

the Age or Spirit of Grace. The Spirit of Grace started in Jerusalem when the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place. 'When the day of Shavuot (Pentecost) had come, they were together in full agreement in one place (in the upper room, Acts 1:13) when suddenly there came a sound from heaven like the rushing of a stormy wind that filled the house in which they were sitting. Flames like tongues of fire settled on each one of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Holy Spirit gave the language. There were residing in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven' (Acts 2:1 to 5).

When Jesus was resurrected, He was seen by hundreds of people, including the Roman soldiers who had murdered Him and stabbed or pierced Him with the sword and huge nails. 'When the (Roman) centurion and those who were with him keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquake and all that was happening, they were terribly frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"' (Matthew 27:54). Those soldiers who pierced Him looked to Him (at Him, upon Him), and John 19:34 to 37 said that was the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy. There is more to this prophecy though. It will be fulfilled once again when Jesus returns – not the whole of Zechariah 12 – just this one verse. 'Behold, He is coming with the clouds and every eye will see Him, including those who pierced Him. All the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him' (Revelation 1:7). All the people on earth who have not accepted Jesus will mourn because they will have missed out on salvation. That second fulfilment is in the future.

'In that day there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddo' (Zechariah 12:11). This prophecy does not indicate a battle. It says the people will mourn and it refers to the great mourning that took place in the Valley of Megiddo when King Josiah was killed (2 Chronicles 35:21 to 27). What this prophecy does say, is there would be great mourning when the Jews realised they had rejected their Messiah, and there was grief and shock displayed by the Jews after Jesus was resurrected. They were 'cut to the heart' after Peter told them they had been complicit in calling for the death of their Messiah. 'Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what will we do?"' (Acts 2:37). As we know, many hundreds of thousands of Jews accepted Jesus after Peter told them to repent and be baptised, even though there was great persecution. When the verse says Jesus is coming with clouds, that means literal clouds. 'When Jesus had said these things, as they were watching He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight. While they were looking steadfastly into the sky as He went, two angels stood by them in white clothing and asked, "Why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus Who was received up from you into the sky will come back in the same way as you saw Him going into the sky"' (Acts 1:9 to 11). Jesus was not received into heaven with 'clouds' of people, and He will not return with 'clouds' of people. He went up alone and will come back the same way – alone.

Some New Testament prophecies written by the apostles have been fulfilled. After Stephen was murdered by religious Jews for believing in Jesus (Acts 6:5 to 7:60; 11:19), some of the greatest persecutors were religious Jews persecuting Messianic Jews. Paul was initially one of the worst persecutors (Acts 8:1 to 3; 22:3 to 5; 22:19 & 20; 26:10 & 11) until his dramatic conversion. There was so much persecution of both Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians they believed it was all led by an antichrist spirit, and they believed the chief antichrist was living at that time. 'Let no one deceive you in any way for that day will not come until many have fallen away (as Jesus prophesied) and the man of lawlessness is revealed, who is the son of perdition (destruction), who opposes and exalts himself against all that is God's or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in the temple as God' (2 Thessalonians 2:3 & 4). 'This is the antichrist which you heard was coming and is already in the world ... Many impostors have gone out into the world, men who will not admit to the coming of the Messiah in the flesh. Such a man is the deceiver and the antichrist' (1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:7). The early Christians believed the wicked Nero was the antichrist written about by Paul and John, and he did set himself up in the Jewish temple as a god. The written ancient Hebrew language has no vowels as we have in English, and each character had a numerical value. The name Caesar Nero, pronounced 'Kaisar Neron' (or Emperor Nero in Latin) was written in ancient Hebrew (in the English equivalent) as QSR NRW. If we add the numerical value of each of those characters, we come up with a total of Q = 100; S = 60; R = 200; N = 50; W = 6; N = 50 = 666. Nero was a beast of a man, a cruel despot who did unspeakable acts of evil. We need to look no further to see 'the man' whom Apostle John was writing about. 'Here is wisdom. Those who have understanding let them calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is six hundred and sixty-six' (Revelation 13:18). It is not the number of the devil, a computer or any modern thing – the Bible says it is the number of a man, a very evil man he was but John knew to whom he was referring.

Nero came to power in 54 AD and ruled for 14 years. After the fire of Rome in 64 AD, Nero had hundreds of thousands of Jews and Christians tortured and executed. When Jesus warned the apostles about terrible things that were about to happen in Judea, he was referring to the time when the persecution of Jews and Christians would be at its peak – during the time of Nero. It was Nero who had Apostle Paul killed. The warnings spoken by Jesus could not have been warnings for this day and age. It would not matter in this day and age if they did have to flee in the winter because they can travel in vehicles; there would be no alas for pregnant or nursing mothers because nowadays they could travel by car and not on foot or on donkeys; the modern Israeli people would still drive on the Sabbath Day if they had to, which they could not have done 2,000 years ago and lastly, Jews do not have to flee to the mountains when they are attacked, they go to underground bunkers that are permanently kept ready for such attacks. There was terrible tribulation for the Jews and Christians at that time. They were thrown to lions, used as human torches, tortured, burned alive and all manner of terrible things were done to them. The shortening of the days did not mean days that were ended. It was a time when the literal days were shortened because of two lunar eclipses (which have been recorded in history) and the Roman soldiers had to try to fight in the long hours of darkness, holding a shield and a torch while trying to fight with a sword. Jesus warned believers not to follow false Messiah's and there were plenty of them around then. Nero was one the cruellest, most sadistic rulers the world has ever had. That is what Jesus, Paul and John were warning the Jews and Christians about. By the end of Nero's reign in 68 AD, almost all of the apostles were dead. The attitude of the Roman rulers was, the way to solve any problem was by intense bloodshed. Between 7 AD and 41 AD, Judea had seven different governors. Flavius, Nero and Titus were the eighth, ninth and tenth governors. Flavius ridiculed the Godly beliefs the Jews held dear, he confiscated the priest's robes then demanded a temple tax of 17 talents of gold that would be about \$12,000,000 in today's currency.

In 66 AD the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea rebelled against Flavius in a David versus Goliath battle. The handful of Jews were rebelling against the greatest empire the world had known at that time. Other countries that had been forced into the Roman Empire watched in disbelief as the Jews fought against their mighty foe and the Roman rulers knew the world was watching. The Romans knew if the Jews won, there would be no way of keeping the empire intact so Nero set out to utterly destroy the Jews and Christians. He sent his general Vespasian and troops from Rome, but the determined Jews and Christians kept resisting. At that time, the Christians felt Jerusalem was as important to them as it was to the Jews. Remember, Christianity is a Jewish extension of Judaism and they held fast to the Jewish traditions taught to them by the apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Vespasian was given absolute command over all the legions of troops. One legion was 6,000 soldiers. He moved slowly and methodically. By 68 AD all of Judea had been conquered and taken back, but Jerusalem stood strong. The Roman army went up against the walls of Jerusalem again and again, but they were repeatedly rebuffed. Nero died before Jerusalem could be conquered. The Roman senate offered the governorship to Vespasian who gave the task of destroying Jerusalem to his son Titus (obviously not the apostle). Titus made the destruction of Jerusalem his whole focus. He had Jerusalem completely surrounded with more than 80,000 soldiers, who had been commanded to don full battle uniform and parade around the walls of the city for three days in an effort to intimidate. Far from showing intimidation, when the Roman soldiers had ended their parade the Jews let out a long, loud cheer from the ramparts.

Titus became enraged. Huge rocks were catapulted at the walls of Jerusalem using a trebuchet, until a massive hole was smashed through a wall where Roman soldiers poured in by the thousand. It took the Jews two weeks of relentless, savage combat to drive the Romans out. Titus then sealed Jerusalem off to prevent any food or water entering the city in an effort to starve the inhabitants into submission. What Titus did not know was the underground tunnel system, river and well that fed Jerusalem. The well and tunnels had been dug out by King David centuries before so Jerusalem had plenty of water and could bring in supplies. Any person caught anywhere in that area who was not a Roman soldier was immediately flogged and crucified in sight of the Jews and Christians still in Jerusalem. Some days, as many as 500 people were crucified.

The Romans used battering rams and made portable bridges to enter Jerusalem once again. It had taken two years but this time, exactly what Jesus said would happen, did happen. Most people were slaughtered, including priests and Christians. Some were tossed over the walls to their deaths; some were sold as slaves; some were fed to lions; others were made human torches; many were crucified and the temple was burned and torn apart brick by brick, as the Roman soldiers tried to collect the melting gold that ran between the bricks, leaving only two parts of the Western Wall. When Jerusalem was besieged and hundreds of thousands of Jews and Christians were slaughtered, hundreds of Jews hid on the mountain of Masada (Masada), Herod's old fortress. There were 960 Jews against 8,000 Romans soldiers. The siege lasted for some time fulfilling Zechariah 12:2. They held out until the Romans finally breached the wall. In pure terror

and to prevent themselves from suffering the same fate as thousands of others, the Jews drew straws and murdered each other until there were only two women left who hid behind the water cistern and they were the ones who told the story of the massacre and desolation described in the prophecies of Daniel, Zechariah and Jesus.

The Jews and the Christians who stood up against the might of Rome were incredibly brave. The war had lasted 3½ years, as is written in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 7:25; 9:27). During all this time of terrible persecution, the Messianic Jews were still a cohesive part of the Jewish community and all of the believers, Jews and Gentiles alike continued to spread the Gospel wherever they went. We need to praise the Lord for the dedication and bravery of these wonderful people for spreading the Gospel of the Kingdom in the face of such terrible persecution. Without them, many of us would never have heard the Gospel of Jesus that has been carried down through the centuries. Once that war was over and the Roman Emperor ceased to exile, enslave or kill the Jews and Christians, the surviving Jews (approximately a third of the original population) who were left in Jerusalem lived in relative safety and peace. There has always been a remnant of Jews living in Israel. This confirms what is written in Zechariah 13:8, 'It will happen in all the land (of Israel), two thirds will be cut off and die but the third will be left in it' says the Lord. And in Joel, 'Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem from generation to generation' (Joel 3:20).

"Behold, I will send for many fishers," says the Lord, "They will fish them out and afterward I will send for many hunters and they will hunt them from every mountain and from every hill and out of the clefts of the rocks" (Jeremiah 16:16). This prophecy was fulfilled in Europe during the 1930's when the Jews were being called back to Israel to rebuild their nation. The Lord was warning the Jewish people they would be hunted down if they did not leave the nations to where they had been scattered. Many hundreds of Jews went 'fishing', encouraging Jews from all over the world to return to Israel. Some Jews refused to go because they were too comfortable in their European lifestyles. Eventually, those who ignored the warning given through prophecy were trapped. The door of opportunity to save themselves and their families closed. Nazi 'hunters' came and we all know the result. The Lord did not want that to happen to His people. He warned them to flee and those who remained in Europe suffered terrible persecution. This prophecy was not understood until years after the event. The Lord is once again calling the Jewish people to return to Israel and millions have already returned but about half of the world's Jewish population are still scattered. There are dedicated Christians and Jewish people travelling all over the world 'fishing' for Jews to help them return to Israel. We can only hope time does not run out and 'hunters' once again go out to seek those who are still in exile. Before the Lord returns, many more Jewish people will be in Israel, as the prophecies foretell. However, the prophet Isaiah did prophesy about Jewish people returning to Israel after the thousand-year reign of Jesus has begun and all persecution of Jews will cease (Isaiah 11:1 to 16).

The Lord has avenged His people on earth, as we know about the sufferings and humiliation of the German peoples after the war, but there is also Judgement Day yet to come when those who harmed the Lord's people will be eternally punished. Nazi war criminals who avoided prison here on earth and think they got away with their crimes, still have to face the Lord on Judgement Day and that is one appointment they will never be able to avoid. God will hold them accountable so in reality, they have not got away with the unspeakable things they did to the Jews. 'For we know Him Who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge the cases of His people." It is a fearful thing to incur His wrath and fall into the hands of the living God!' (Hebrews 10:30 & 31). The Lord will execute judgement on all people who persecute the Jews and He will judge those who divide up Israel. "I will gather all nations ... I will deal with them and execute judgment on them for their treatment of My people and of My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations. They have divided my land' (Joel 3:2).

'Be glad you children of Zion and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he gives you the former rain in just measure and he causes the rain to come down for you, the former rain and the latter rain as before' (Joel 2:23). This verse was mentioned earlier in this Bible study and is not talking about a watery precipitation. The Lord tells the children of Zion to rejoice. The only word the Lord uses for the 'One New Man' of Jews and Gentile believers together, is Zion. The former rain is the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit 2,000 years ago and after 300 years or so, the church went into serious decline as the Jews were persecuted by the church. The latter rain is the steady drizzle of modern-day believers who are coming to know the Lord, are filled with the Holy Spirit then turn their eyes back towards our Hebraic roots and to the Jewish people. The early church was made up of mostly Jewish people and the modern rains will result in the church being made up of many Gentiles who love and support the Jewish people and Israel. 'It will happen afterward, I will pour out My Holy Spirit on all flesh (all believers). Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. On the servants and on the handmaids in those days, I will

pour out My Spirit' (Joel 2:28 & 29). The above prophecy of Joel 2:23 was the start of the events that led up to the former 'rain'. 'This is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel, "It will be in the last (latter) days," says God, "I will pour out My Holy Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Yes and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days, I will pour out My Holy Spirit and they will prophesy"' (Acts 2:16 to 18). This particular two-fold prophecy (the former rain) was fulfilled in the days of the apostles, but the latter rain is being fulfilled right now, in our day.

When countries come against Israel and Jerusalem in our day, the Lord will stand up and defend His people. Many amazing miracles are happening in Israel today as God is clearly defending His land as He promised. Just recently for example, as the Israeli soldiers were being fired upon by their enemies, the Lord sent an unexpected cloud to cover the Israeli soldiers and protect them from the gunfire. Zechariah 12:5 to 9, 'The chieftains of Judah will say in their heart, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the Lord of heavenly Armies, their God." In that day I will make the chieftains of Judah like a pan of fire among wood, and like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left and Jerusalem will yet again dwell in their own place, even in Jerusalem. God also will save the houses of Judah first so the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem not be magnified above Judah. In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He who is feeble among them at that day will be like David and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them. It will happen in that day, I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

'The days will come in which there will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down ... The Jews will fall by the edge of the sword and will be led captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled' (Luke 21:6 & 24). The prophecy spoken by Jesus regarding the destruction of the temple and the treading down of Jerusalem was fulfilled in 70 AD but the last part of this prophecy was fulfilled when Jerusalem was finally given back to the Jews after 2,000 years. Jerusalem is still partially 'trodden down' by Gentiles but eventually, when the time is right, all Jerusalem will once again belong wholly to the Jews as their capital.

There are many hundreds more prophecies that have been fulfilled and do not need to be fulfilled again. To see just how many prophecies have been fulfilled, we need to study the Bible, and if an Old Testament prophecy has been mentioned in the New Testament as having been fulfilled, it will not be fulfilled again unless the scriptures tell us otherwise, as in the verse regarding the people who 'pierced' Jesus will look on Him. History from the past 2,000 years and events that happened after the Bible was completed, tells us many other prophecies have been fulfilled. One such prophecy was possibly fulfilled about 1,000 AD when Muslims massacred so many Jews and Christians, their blood mixed with floodwaters ran down the streets of Jerusalem and out of the city. Someone made a mark on a wall to show the depth of the blood with the scripture reference written in blood. 'The winepress was trodden outside of the city and blood flowed from the winepress as high as the bridles of the horses as far as about 200 miles' (Revelation 14:20).

We can be sure there is one prophecy that has most definitely not yet been fulfilled. The Lord has promised us a new universe and a new earth for the righteous to dwell on and He will live amongst us. All believers, Jews and Gentiles alike, are waiting for that to be fulfilled. 'Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered ... For as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will remain before Me, says the Lord, so will your descendants and your name remain' (Isaiah 65:17 & 66:22). 'We look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promise, in which righteousness dwells' (2 Peter 3:13). 'I (John) saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God' (Revelation 21:2).

Amen and God bless you.

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