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The BIBLE and the Future

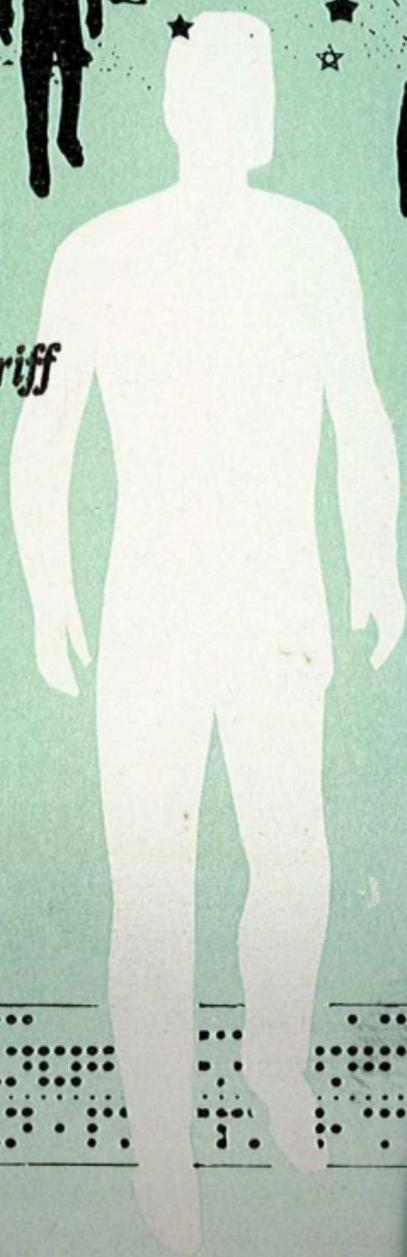
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*Margaretta Mary Woodruff
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LEIGHTON FORD

The BIBLE and the Future

Often I'm asked, "How do you know the Bible is true?"

One line of evidence is archeology. A top Jewish scholar, Dr. Nelson Glueck, says that not one archeological discovery has ever contradicted the Bible.

Another line of evidence is fulfilled prophecy.

I'm going to ask you to let your imagination roam a little bit. Imagine that you're a scholar. You're in a musty library digging into old manuscripts that date back over a thousand years. One day you come across a volume covered with dust. As you begin to read, you can hardly believe your eyes! With growing excitement you realise you've come across one of the most fantastic discoveries of all time — a collection of predictions made by several writers who lived between 950 A.D. and 1400 A.D. And although the last of them wrote over five hundred years ago, they predict in unbelievable detail the life of one of the most famous personalities of the twentieth century.

According to this book, his forebears would come from Ireland. He himself would be born in the United States, in the state of Massachusetts, and in the town of Brookline. He would become a politician, begin his career in his home state, but eventually go to Washington, D.C.

With fantastic accuracy the facts of his death would be outlined. Writing about 1400 A.D. one writer would predict that his last ride would be in an open limousine. About 1200 A.D. another would predict that he would die in the company of other politicians. Three others, writing about 950 A.D., would specifically predict that he would be assassinated, that he would be shot, that he would die of a bullet wound in the head, and that his clothes would be cut off him by doctors in a hospital emergency room.

Stunned, trembling with excitement, you would realise that more than five hundred years before the fact the birth, the career, and the death of John Kennedy, thirty-fifth President of the United States, had been written down! Reading on you would then discover that this same book with remarkable accuracy had also forecast other events in history. And what's more, it would also speak of the future of the human race and predict events yet to come!

Now imagine how you'd feel! In your hands is the secret of the future! Any world leader you could name would pay any price you'd ask just to have access to that book.

Now, of course, all of this is pure fantasy. There is no such book telling about John Kennedy.

But — and here's the point — a book would have to predict all those details that accurately and that many centuries ago just to equal the record of the Bible!

Did you know that nearly one quarter of the Bible is made up of prophecy? The prophets in the Bible were forthtellers; they told forth God's message in their own generation. But they were also foretellers; they foretold future events.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses gives us the criteria to recognise a true prophet. The first test is **accuracy**. In Deuteronomy 18 (verse 22) Moses says that if the thing prophesied doesn't come to pass, we can know it's not the Lord who has given him the message.

The second test is **consistency**. In Deuteronomy 13 (verses 1-3) Moses tells us that if a prophet foretells the future and his prophecy comes true but he says, "Come after other gods," we're not to listen to him. In other words, just the fact that a so-called prophet's prediction happens doesn't mean that he speaks from God. We need to apply this test in our own day when there are many prophets claiming to be speaking for God. We must also be sure that what they say is consistent with the whole teaching of the Bible about the one true God.

The prophets whose writings are in the Bible pass both these tests. They consistently tell about the one God, and they accurately portray what will come to pass.

Let's look today at a few examples:

Here's the prophet Ezekiel, six centuries before Christ. In Ezekiel 26 he makes seven specific predictions about the doom of the city of Tyre:

1. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Bābylon, would take the city.
2. Other nations would help fulfil the prophecy.
3. Tyre would be made flat like the top of a rock.
4. It would become a place for spreading nets.
5. Its stones and timbers would be laid in the sea.
6. Other nations would fear because of Tyre's fall.

7. The old city of Tyre would never be rebuilt.

And it happened just like that. Nebuchadnezzar led a thirteen-year-old siege that destroyed the old city. The citizens fled to an island a half mile off-shore. That island city lasted until 332 B.C. Then Alexander the Great invaded it by tearing down the ruins of the city and, note this, by making a bridge out of its rocks and timbers, laying them in the sea, exactly as Ezekiel predicted. In the thirteenth century, Moslems completely wiped it out. It has never been rebuilt. And today tourists watch fishermen spread their nets on the barren rock.

Or take the prophecies about Jesus Himself. Some 333 Old Testament passages predict the Messiah to come. Remember that imaginary list of predictions about John Kennedy that I made up a few minutes ago? Now compare that with these actual predictions about the Messiah:

700 B.C. — Micah says He'll be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1).

500 B.C. — Zechariah says He'll make His last trip on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:7).

700 B.C. — Isaiah says He'll be whipped and spat at (Isaiah 50:6, Matthew 26:67).

700 B.C. — Isaiah says He'll die among thieves (Isaiah 53:12, Mark 15:27).

1000 B.C. — The Psalmist says His garments will be gambled for (Psalm 22:18, John 19:23, 24).

1000 B.C. — The Psalmist says His hands and feet will be pierced; in other words, death by crucifixion (Psalm 22:16, Luke 23:33, 24:40).

1000 B.C. — The Psalmist says not a bone of

His will be broken, a prediction which came true (Psalm 34:20, John 19:33). Jesus' bones were not broken on the Cross, contrary to the Roman practice of breaking the legs of those executed by crucifixion.

On and on the list goes, and every one of these is specifically fulfilled. Put them all together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and suddenly you have a composite picture of the Messiah, which spells out Jesus.

Coincidence, you say?

Let me ask, Do you know about the principle of probability? This principle of probability simply says that the more things you predict, the less chance there is of having them all come true exactly as you forecast.

Dr. Peter Stoner, a scientist at Pasadena City College, worked with six hundred college students for several years applying this principle of probability to Bible prophecy. Do you know what they found?

The chances of the seven predictions Ezekiel made about the fall of Tyre "just happening" are one in four hundred million! The chances of just eight of the prophecies about Jesus happening by sheer coincidence are one in — now hold your hat — one in ten followed by thirty-two zeros!

You can say if you want that these things happened by chance, but the odds are against you!

Now fulfilled prophecy doesn't prove by itself that the Bible is given by God. What it does show is that the men who wrote it had more than mere human knowledge.

"So what?" somebody says. "That's interest-

ing; maybe it's even true. But it's all ancient history. It's not relevant for me today.'

But that's just the point. The Bible isn't just ancient history. It's current events. The message of the Bible isn't a relic of the past. It tells us what is happening and what's going to happen.

It's clear today that human history is headed rapidly toward some great climax. Scientists and statesmen speak of a critical point in the mid-seventies, a catastrophic point by the end of the century.

Twenty centuries ago Jesus listed certain signs of the climax of history — false messiahs, wars far and near, earthquakes, famines, persecution, pestilence. Now every generation has had some of these signs, but today they are intensifying as never before.

And something else. Jesus gave two specific signs that are being uniquely fulfilled in our time!

In Mark 13:10 (LB) He said, "The Good News must first be made known in every nation before the endtime finally comes." For twenty centuries the Christian church has been carrying out the Great Commission. And only today is world evangelisation near fulfillment. Television, radio and modern technology make it possible as never before to take the Good News to every creature. A missionary student tells me there are now only two nations in the world without a known testimony to Jesus Christ.

The second sign: In Luke 21:24 (LB) Jesus predicted that "Jerusalem shall be conquered and trampled down by the Gentiles until the period of Gentile triumph ends . . ." In 70 A.D. the Jews were driven from Jerusalem and scattered. Eighteen hundred years passed before they began to return. And in 1948 the

Jewish State of Israel was established. Now Bible students disagree on the exact significance of Israel's return in God's plan. But all must agree a key prediction of Jesus' has come true in our time and indicates that some "X" point in God's timetable has come.

On Monday, March 20, 1942, the Philippine Islands were falling under the onslaught of Japanese invaders. General Douglas MacArthur waded into the waters of the Pacific to set out for a new headquarters in Australia from where he would wage his return campaign. Standing waist-deep in the sea he called out to the Filipinos, "I shall return". Throughout the long years of oppression that promise kept hope alive in the valiant Philippine people. MacArthur kept his promise, He did return.

Twenty centuries ago Jesus Christ said to His followers, "I will come again" (John 14:3). And He will. Throughout these long years that promise has kept believers on their tiptoes. When He comes, justice will be established, peace will reign, wrongs will be put right, and God's new world will emerge.

Fulfilled prophecy is more than a hobby for curiosity seekers. It tells us that God's hand is at work in history. It tells us that His plans are on schedule. The world is like a stage, and God is both the Author and the Chief Actor in the drama. As events unfold, God works them all together — bad and good — for His purpose. And that message spells hope!

So what? So the answer is in three words.

First, **work**. The Second Coming of Christ ought to lead us not to resignation, but to cooperation with what God is doing. The Christian ought to be the true activist. Jesus

said, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). Paul wrote, "Since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted" (1 Corinthians 15:58, LB). I like what David Wilkerson says, "The true Jesus Person doesn't drop out; he digs in."

Second, **witness**. "It is not for you to know times or seasons," said Jesus as He left His men. "But . . . you shall be my witnesses . . . to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:7, 8, RSV). What a challenge it is to know that believers can actually touch the timetable of God! We are to evangelise to a finish to bring back the King.

The third word is **watch**. Jesus said, "You do not know when I will come, at evening, at midnight, early dawn or late daybreak. Don't let me find you sleeping. **Watch for my return!** This is my message to you and to everyone else." (Mark 13:35-37, LB).

Jesus folk singer Larry Norman has a song, "I Wish We'd All Been Ready". Let me ask, Are you ready if Christ came back? If you're a believer, are you living in faithfulness to Christ so if He came you wouldn't be "ashamed . . . at his coming" (1 John 2:28)? If you're not a believer, what better time than now to get right with God?

As C.S. Lewis once wrote, "The doctrine of the Second Coming may be to some people intolerably frustrating. Perhaps you are going to get married next week; perhaps you're going to get a raise next week; you may be on the verge of a great scientific discovery; you may be maturing great social and political reforms; but **now**, of all moments, Christ may come again."

When He comes, it will be too late to repent

and change your way of life. Now is the time. Today turn from sin, turn in faith to Christ, receive Him as your Saviour, the Messiah whom the prophets foretold, and follow Him as Lord as He unfolds His victorious plan for the future of the world.

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MY DECISION

Believing that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for me and is now living, I want this to be my "hour of decision."

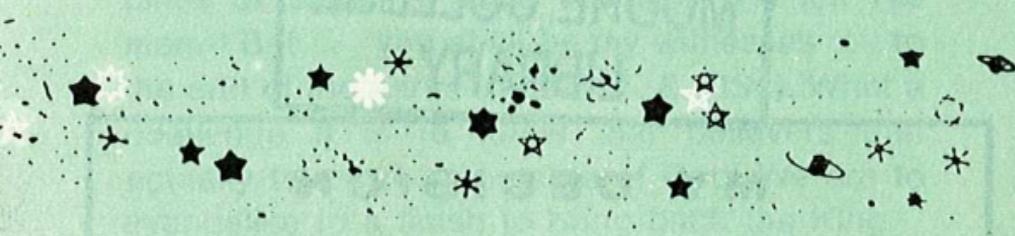
Acknowledging that I am a sinner, I receive Jesus as my personal Savior and will trust in, rely upon and adhere to Him as my Lord.

v

name _____

address _____

date of decision _____



ZCM

Good Music

