



The Computer Age in Prophecy

Did the Bible Predict the Internet?

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Dedications

To my wife, Dalice, who continually
prodded me with, ...
“When are you going to write your book;
When are you going to write your book!”

And to my devoted mother,

Enid A. Caines-Edwards

Acknowledgements

The wise man Solomon declared, “There is nothing new under the sun” and “naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs” (Ecclesiastes 1:9; 5:15). We all have someone who came before us to thank for all of our ‘wisdom’.

I would like to thank my teacher, Dr. Clarence Pamphile, who taught me to view end-time prophecy from a perspective I never saw before. That perspective has heavily influenced the first half of this book.

I would also like to thank the author of an article, based on Daniel 2 that I read over ten years ago in *The Signs of the Times* magazine. (I regret that the publisher of this magazine was not able to locate the article so that I can credit the author by name.) This article was the springboard for the seminar presentations that eventually developed into the writing of this book.

Thanks to all those who provided feedback to the material presented here that allowed me to improve the final product.

And finally, thanks to my family who provided moral and emotional support throughout the process of creating this work.

May all glory go to the True Source of all wisdom—God.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
1. HOW WILL THIS WORLD REALLY END?.....	12
2. HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND BIBLE PROPHECY?	17
3. DON'T MISS THE PURPOSE.....	27
4. NOT YOUR AVERAGE WISE MAN	
5. BABYLON—THE HEAD OF GOLD.....	
6. MEDO-PERSIA—THE SILVER KINGDOM.....	
7. GREECE—THE KINGDOM OF BRONZE.....	
8. ROME—THE IRON KINGDOM.....	
9. THE TEN DIVIDED KINGDOMS	
10. WHEN COMMON CLAY IS NOT SO 'COMMON'	
11. A YOUNG METAL TAKES THE STAGE.....	
12. AT THE HEART OF NEW TECHNOLOGY	
13. THE NEW INFORMATION AGE	
14. THE ROCK CUT FROM A MOUNTAIN	
15. CONCLUSION	

INTRODUCTION

I was about to leave for university to read for a science degree. This was a lifelong dream for me, and one that hardly seemed possible as less than three percent of students leaving high school in my small island were privileged enough to attend college. This was not for a lack of intelligence, but simply the reality of the economics of a small third world country. For a disadvantaged student like myself, my only hope was in obtaining a government scholarship, and the unlikely happened—helped by some hard work.

Needless to say, my local church was proud of my accomplishment but feared for me ‘losing my way’ through the murky waters of higher science education. I can still recall the admonitions given to me in a farewell letter by my local church leader, Leroy Pemberton Sr. He recounted the early religious influences of Charles Darwin, the father of evolutionary biology, as a very pertinent lesson of ‘warning’ for me. According to his letter, Darwin was able to formulate the theory of evolution, in rejection of the Bible creation account, despite Darwin’s study of theology. As a Christian young man I needed to beware lest I be led astray by the courses that I was about to take.

That was twenty years ago, and I am still an ardent believer in God and the Genesis account of the creation of the world. This does not mean that all the warnings I received were without merit. I can still remember a series of lectures that I had to attend as part of a course called *Development of Civilization*, which traced human history from the early beginning to present day. As part of the presentations, a biology professor explained that the Bible stories were merely man’s early attempt to make sense of the natural world around him. The more ‘scientifically

advanced' during Bible times were regarded as witches or sorcerers and often ostracized. Every miracle recorded in the Bible was a 'myth', and should be questioned by the 'higher principles' of modern science.

As far as I can recall, none of my professors confessed to any religion or attended church. It appeared to my young mind that it was either science or the Bible, but never both. I knew of other highly educated people who were Christians, but most were not trained in the sciences. On reflection, my exposure was limited, but it is still true today that a literal acceptance of the Bible account of the creation of the world is not the popular view.

A few years after completing my science degree, I was able to attend a Christian college, this time to read for a degree in theology—the queen of the sciences. It took me some time to adjust to the rules of the arts after using the scientific methods for so many years as both a student and a teacher. Yet I discovered no contradiction between the realm of *true* science and theology. I say *true* science because the scientist cannot prove using the scientific method the theory of evolution; neither can the theologian prove the creation story. Both require faith, without which it is 'impossible to please God', and also to be an evolutionist.

I think that I was particularly 'prepared' to write this book, because for many years I have searched for the science that sustained my faith in the Bible. Also a fundamental reason for my continued belief in God and the Scriptures has been fulfilled Bible prophecy. It is easy for a university professor to declare my faith to be based on ancient midwife tales, but not when those tales predicted 2,500 years in advance the science I was studying.

One of the grave dangers of scientific progress and advances in technology is that we lose our awe for the supernatural. It is like reverencing our mechanics and their

cutting-edge tools to the extent that we forget who designed and manufactured the vehicle in the first place. Yet, it is almost considered taboo to speak of miracles and dreams when we have a mechanical rover on Mars, and have deciphered the human genome.

In this short book we are going to take a journey from first-century Jerusalem to sixth-century BC Babylon, then eventually to our present day and the future. My hope is that along the way, you may find some of the same evidences that have helped to sustain the faith of a seemingly vulnerable college matriculate.

CHAPTER 1

How Will This World Really End?

Since I was a child, I've always been fascinated by the prophetic books of the Bible. I must say that I've always been captivated by the Bible as a whole. It is no less than amazing how this bestseller has been accurate in predicting the great movements of history, and has consistently been 'dead on'.

Interpretations of these prophecies may differ from commentator to commentator, but any inaccuracy is no fault of the Bible but of the interpreter. I think we have to be always careful when predicting the future, but we can be more dogmatic when studying the way in which the prophecies have already been fulfilled.

Curiosity about the future is part of our natural makeup. Otherwise, how could you account for the success of the psychic hotline industry and books such as the Left Behind Series by Tim LaHaye & Jerry Jenkins? Even today, books that attempt to predict the future turn out to be number one bestsellers. We all want to know how things are going to work out in our personal lives and in the world at large.

Even the disciples of Jesus once came to Him with questions about how this world would end. We find them on the Mount of Olives, overlooking Jerusalem with its proud temple of shiny white walls and huge stones. For the disciples, the temple represented permanence and it would always remain. Imagine their distress when Jesus plainly told them that "not one stone will be left upon another" (Matthew 24:2). This was not part of their expectation for the future of their temple or the world.

Later in this same chapter of Matthew, Jesus goes on to explain all the signs that would accompany the fall of Jerusalem and the final events of this world. These signs covered the political, economic, religious and social landscape associated with the final acts of history. You only have to watch the evening news a few times to realize that Jesus knew what He was saying—earthquakes, increase in crime, lack of natural love, signs in the heavens (UFOs?) and the spread of the gospel into all the world. Some see these signs as pervading all of history and not particular to our day. But even outside of those signs tied to human nature, we see an increase in the frequency of earthquakes and other natural disasters. Even the natural world is reminding us that these present times are more than just ‘ordinary’.

If we should now return to the disciples on Mt. Olives, we find Jesus recommending the reading of an Old Testament prophet by the name of Daniel. He told his followers, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Matthew 24:15,16). Jesus recognized Daniel as a prophet and a historical figure we should both read and understand! Considering that Daniel did not fully comprehend the complete message he was asked to record, we may just have an exciting adventure before us.

So let's take the advice of the Great Teacher and take a skip back to Daniel's book. We read in Daniel 12:8,9: "I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end." There was a period defined as the "time of the end" when the book—particularly the prophecies—would be better understood.

This message from the angel opens to us a very important principle of deciphering Bible prophecy, hinted to earlier— We can better understand the prophecies *after* their fulfillment. We have to be always cautious about deciphering unfulfilled prophecies, where it is easy to overstep the safe interpretive bounds, and venture into the land of pure speculation.

Several attempts have been made in the past by various ‘prophets’ to date the end of the world. But trying to predict the exact time of the end and the second return of Jesus is a futile exercise. Jesus in fact discouraged such speculations, and warned about imposters who would appear and claim to be the Christ. We read:

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24: 23-27).

This stern warning has not deterred many from trying to place an exact date or year on the return of Jesus. The faithful watcher is given many signs to know the ‘season’ of His return but no man can know the date of this eventful day.

I don't think there is any other prophecy that has been scoffed at more than the promised return of Jesus. In fact, the Apostle Peter predicted this would be so when he wrote:

First of all, you must understand that in the last days *scoffers* will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:3,4).

Coincidentally, a great tenant of the teaching of the evolutionist is that "everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation". Evolutionists may not admit to an active 'creation', but they have to assume all the physical laws that we know presently have always operated in the same way. Accepting this principle is the only way in which the evolutionist can extrapolate backwards to guess the age of the earth and other geological "facts".

I doubt Peter had the evolutionist in mind, but he goes on to argue that things have *not* always gone on as usual. He then gives Noah's flood as an example: "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed" (2 Peter 3:5,6). There has been a drastic natural disaster that has affected the earth. I often smile when I hear respected scientists explain the enigma of the sudden extinction of the dinosaurs. Although one must admit there are obvious difficulties with the account of the flood and Noah's Ark, it is still easier to believe the dinosaurs were killed in that deluge, than to think some meteoric shower singled them out for destruction.

I think I will have to leave the issue of Noah's flood for another book, but there is the lingering question of the generations of preachers that have preached and believed they were living in "the last days". I have personally heard many skeptics say, "My great grandmother said Jesus was coming soon, and then my grandmother and now my mother and He hasn't come as yet". Well, we can go back

about 1,900 years earlier to the addressees of the Apostle Peter's letter. Even back then, people were making fun of Jesus' promise that he made to his disciples. Peter had a reason why this promise was not yet fulfilled:

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. *He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (2 Peter 3:8-10, *emphasis mines*).

Peter clearly tells us that God is not limited by time, or views time as we do. Also, his non-appearance is an expression of His longsuffering and should never be taken for granted! At the same time, I think this issue warrants a closer look, and in the process we shall discover some very important principles to be applied in understanding the predictive elements of Bible prophecy. This will be the burden of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

How Can We Understand Bible Prophecy?

Just start speaking about the Bible, and you would hear it: “Oh, everybody has his or her own opinions because it all depends on how you look at it”. This statement rings strange, because you seldom hear people debate about what a biology textbook means when it says ‘such-and-such’. Still, I am aware of this argument and should let you know “my interpretive angle” when trying to understand the Bible.

Simply stated, I believe the Bible interprets itself. This is the foundational principle upon which I study the Scriptures, and the one I shall follow throughout this book. Still this principle needs some explanation. What do I mean when I say, “the Bible interprets itself?”

I think this can best be presented by way of an illustration.

Let’s say that I was invited to do a talk to a group of children on the importance of good dental hygiene, and during this presentation I made the statement to one youngster, “Your teeth are golden”. Now did I mean that his teeth were *yellow* like gold? (This would be a little rude, wouldn’t it?) Or, perhaps that his teeth were as *precious* as gold? Well, you can just judge by the *context* of the speech. Considering that I was explaining how important and valuable his teeth were, then you may guess that I meant ‘precious’.

Here are some things that you can do to confirm your conclusion:

1. Read the entire speech instead of just taking the one statement.
2. Read *other* speeches that I've made if they are available to you, and see how I used that same statement.
3. See how other people in *my community* used that statement, and how *they* understood it.

This almost seems like common sense doesn't it? Yet if we applied the same 'rules' to understanding the Bible, so many difficulties will disappear. Instead of just taking one passage and making castles of interpretation from that one passage, we can carry out the same steps as I've outlined above and be closer to the true meaning. Of course there are places where the language of the Bible is clearly figurative, but the language will betray itself as such. Just think of it. We use figurative language all the time, and there should be no surprises that the Bible writers also did. This is very apparent in the mainly prophetic books of Daniel and Revelation. (*Note: The Bible's definition of 'prophecy' includes more than just predictions, but for the purpose of our discussions in this book we shall use the word as commonly understood, i.e. foretelling, forecasting.*)

With that settled—and I'm being a little ambitious here—let's look at the last prophecy recorded in the Old Testament:

See I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse (Malachi 4:5,6).

This prophecy was one of the last recorded predictions about the coming of the Messiah. The period that elapsed between Malachi's time and the time of Jesus'

birth was about 400 years. Scholars often refer to this era as the ‘silent years’, because no canonical prophets came out of this ‘intertestamental period’—the time between the Testaments.

This prediction appears very clear. Before the Messiah was to show up, Elijah, that prophet *par excellence*, will appear to introduce Him. A close study of the four gospels reveals that the Jews in Jesus’ day took this very literally. What’s more, when the angel Gabriel announced the birth of John the Baptist to the startled Zechariah, Gabriel said:

Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of *Elijah*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:13-17, *emphasis mines*).

We discover here that this is a direct quote from Malachi’s prophecy, and Gabriel says John the Baptist will fulfill this prophecy.

Later on, we find the adult John in the wilderness dressed in camel’s hair and on a diet of wild honey and locust, armed with a heart-searching message of repentance and preparation for the Messiah’s appearance. John’s listeners were so stirred by his direct appeals, that they became convinced he was the resurrected Old Testament

prophet Elijah. John (the disciple) records this in his gospel:

Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ."
They asked him, "Then who are you? *Are you Elijah?*"
He said, "I am not."
"Are you the Prophet?"
He answered, "*No.*"
Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"
John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (John 1:19-23, *emphasis mines*)

John the Baptist declined to assume the titles 'Christ' (or Messiah), 'Elijah' or a 'prophet'. When asked directly if he was Elijah, he said plainly, "No." He saw himself only as a messenger to prepare people for the Christ as told by Isaiah.

John the Baptist knew nothing of 'political correctness' back then, and so preached against the sins of the high as well as the low. King Herod was now married to Herodias, the ex-wife of his brother Phillip. This illicit marriage made illustrative subject material for John's sermons, and word of this soon reached the palace. Herod was a little intimidated by John, but his wife was bolder and so had John imprisoned. In that cold and dark Roman dungeon, John's faith waned weak.

It was John the Baptist who on that eventful day pointed out Jesus to the amazed crowd as "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). John saw the dove lighted upon his subject for baptism in

the river Jordan. John heard the voice thunder from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". Now shut away from the sunlight he was so accustomed to in the wilderness, he felt forgotten by God Himself. Physically weak and discouraged, he sent some of his disciples to inquire of Jesus if He really was the promised Messiah. Talk about the power of discouragement!

John's disciples encountered Jesus in Galilee with their master's question, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matthew 11:3) Jesus then went on to perform some miracles, asking them to take the report back to John. As John's disciples started to file away, Jesus then turned to the crowd and explained:

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: " 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, *he is the Elijah who was to come*. He who has ears, let him hear (Matthew.11:7-15).

Jesus identified the 'my messenger' of Malachi 3:1 with John the Baptist. He also commended him as being 'more than a prophet'. Then Jesus clearly stated that John was the fulfillment of the Elijah prophecy!

Now let's do a quick review here. Malachi 4:5,6 records that before the 'day of the Lord' comes, Elijah will appear. Gabriel said to Zechariah that his yet unborn son, John, would fulfill this prediction. But when John himself was questioned, he said he was not Elijah. Jesus was the one who stated plainly that John was Elijah. Yet John was said to be the greatest prophet. This would imply that John the Baptist was fulfilling a prophecy that not even he was aware of. Now this is the 'greatest prophet' who fulfills a prophecy and is unaware of it! Now where does that leave me ... where does it leave you? But just wait a minute because John was not the only one to be caught in this predicament.

One of the major reasons the people of Jesus' day did not accept him was that he did not fit their understanding, or rather expectation, of a Messiah. For them, the Messiah should bring military victory over the Romans and restore Israel to its Davidic prominence. This nationalistic feeling ran deeply in even Christ's disciples, who were caught unprepared when their Master died an ignominious death. The disciples were continually jostling for an expected high position in the earthly kingdom of the Messiah, which they supposed, would make them very influential. Their expectations involved sitting on the right hand and on the left of an earthly king, not mourning His death.

Just think about it for a while. You are next to Jesus in the 'inner circle'; this is bound to bring you real power when he sets up his government. Jesus can raise the dead—this means no real casualties of war. He heals the sick so no unhealthy citizens; feeds thousands at a time with one sack lunch—his subjects will never be hungry! Who would not want to be a part of such a kingdom? No wonder the disciples were so blinded by selfish ambition. This same blind ambition masked their minds to

understanding plain statements made by Jesus about his death. We read from Matthew:

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, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:21-23).

Peter was expressing the sentiments of the entire group when he spoke these words. The disciples thought Jesus was losing his mind in even suggesting he could die. These twelve men had missed the very purpose of their Master's mission. But how could they when their instructor was the greatest Teacher this world has ever seen? Were they so slow in mind?

I think the answer to these questions lie in a deep-rooted facet of the human mind. We are always ready to 'understand' and accept whatever agrees with our way of thinking. In other words, if you agree with me you are making a great point!

There is an observation that I've often made while using the New York City subway. The brave souls who venture there know that rush hour time can be very intimidating, even for the initiated. I look at the river of humanity running through those man-made burrows, hurrying for the next train or a connecting bus. I can see determination etched into their faces. There is the chorus of trampling feet, the roar of express trains and the nerve-wrecking screech of the brakes of trains, pulling into the stations. Yet above all the cacophony of sounds people

would stop at the ringing music of a coin hitting the pavement. I look at the passengers feeling their pockets and looking at their purses that survived the train ride. I marvel that anyone could hear the sound of a coin against a background that can be titled 'noise pollution at its best'. When you think a little deeper you realize that money, even coins, can easily get the attention any New Yorker. (Well, its an expensive place to live I must confess.)

So, for the disciples, Jesus mentioning that he would die and be raised the third day was like the sound of trains and trampling feet. It just did not resonate with his followers because they had previously decided death could never conquer him. Jesus' statement struck no responsive chord. No wonder when they saw their Leader submit himself to a cruel death on a cross their hopes also died with him.

According to Luke, even after the resurrection Peter looked into the empty tomb and was still wondering what happened. How could it not strike him that Jesus was resurrected?

Later that same Sunday, two of Jesus' followers were on their way to the village of Emmaus. They were discussing the terrible events of the past weekend and Jesus joined them as an unrecognized traveler. The resurrected Lord politely joined in the conversation by asking his 'new' companions what they were talking about. Cleopas was shocked that the Stranger did not know about the crucifixion, which should have been common knowledge by now. Can you sense the irony? *They* should have known Jesus would die and be resurrected.

Jesus continued to prompt for more information and so they continued:

“About Jesus of Nazareth, ... He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over

to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 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. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see" (Luke 24:20-24).

Christ then reproved them for being so slow to understand "Moses and all the prophets". He then gives them a detailed study to show how all the Old Testament prophets had spoken about the Messiah and all the things he must suffer. After this, they compelled him to stay with them for supper since it was already late. Jesus accepted their invitation and as he sat at the table, broke the bread and gave thanks in his characteristic style, "their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight" (Luke 24:31). Their immediate reaction was, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

These followers hurried to Jerusalem to share the good news with 'the Eleven' about how they had seen Jesus for themselves. While this excited group of believers was still in conversation, Jesus miraculously appeared in their midst. The gathering was startled by Jesus' sudden appearance because they thought he was a ghost. Jesus presented the scars in his hands and feet as irrefutable evidence he was really risen. As if this wasn't enough, he ate a piece of broiled fish and said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." (Luke 24:44)

The gospel writer then reported that Jesus “opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). He again referred them to the Old Testament prophecies that predicted his death and resurrection. Now if the Scriptures spoke of the Messiah’s death and Jesus told his disciples he would die, how could they have missed this on so many counts? Notice Luke tells us Jesus had to “open their minds” so they could understand the Scriptures. It seems that without the help of Jesus we could never hope to understand Bible prophecy even when it is written in clear non-figurative language. This reminds me of what Paul wrote to the Corinthian church: “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

There are many lessons to be learned from the disciples’ and John the Baptist’s misapprehension of clearly stated prophecies. These lessons will be discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Don't Miss the Purpose

There is nothing like using the correct tools. Ever tried to unscrew a nut with a pair of pliers? Speaking from personal experience, it's a tedious and almost impossible job. You are rewarded with sore hands and the nut often loses its sharp angles and become rounded, making it almost impossible to fit within the correct sized socket again.

When trying to decipher Bible prophecy we can sometimes force the Bible to say what *we* want it to say. This is like using the wrong tool. We can twist the Scriptures and smooth out the sharp angles because we use the wrong interpretive tools. Use the appropriate methods and the job is completed without much damage to the reader or the prophecies.

In the first chapter, I mentioned the disciples' conversation with Jesus on the Mount of Olives. They had a natural concern for the future and Jesus knew this. The purpose, however, for which we are given a glimpse into the future, is not just to satisfy our curiosity. Let's allow the Bible to tell us the reason why prophecy was given:

To read the complete book please go here now:

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