

Can I Trust Prophecy?

We use fulfilled prophecy to prove the validity of the Bible, but some prophecy has not been fulfilled. I have heard ministers say that every Bible prophecy will be fulfilled, but some obviously haven't. How can we explain this?

The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Let's look in the Bible and see what we can find.

GOD DOES NOT CHANGE, HE IS ETERNAL.

Psalm 102:25-7 Of old, you laid the foundation of the earth. The heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will endure. Yes, all of them will wear out like a garment. You will change them like a cloak, and they will be changed. But you are the same. Your years will have no end.

James 1:16-18 Don't be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, nor turning shadow. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Malachi 3:6 For I, the LORD, don't change; therefore you, sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

IF GOD DOES NOT CHANGE AND HE DOES NOT LIE, WILL HE ALWAYS FULFILL WHAT HE HAS SAID?

First let's look at the book of Jonah. In chapter 1 God tells Jonah to go and preach to Ninevah. Instead Jonah attempts to flee from God and gets on a ship for Tarsish. We all know the story of how God sends a storm and Jonah winds up in the belly of a large fish. In chapter 2 Jonah cries out to God and God has the fish vomit him onto dry land. In chapter 3 God commands Jonah to go preach to Ninevah, again, and this time he does what he is told.

Jonah 3:5-6 The people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from their greatest even to their least. The news reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

Jonah 3:10 God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. God relented of the disaster which he said he would do to them, and he didn't do it.

So let's summarize what this says in modern English.

God said to the people of Ninevah,

"You better shape up, or else".

The people believed him and shaped up, so God didn't destroy them.

Did God change? No he did not! The people of Ninevah changed. Some of God's promises depend on what people do, they are conditional.

Here is another scripture showing that some of God's promises depend on what people do.

Jeremiah 18:5-10 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, House of Israel, can't I do with you as this potter? says the LORD. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they not obey my voice, then I will repent of the good, with which I said I would benefit them.

FROM THIS WE CONCLUDE THAT GOD CAN AND WILL REVOKE ANY PROMISE MADE TO ANYONE, IF THEY SHOW CONTEMPT FOR HIM.

God promised that Levi and his sons would be high priests forever, but Levi's descendant, Eli the high priest, allowed his sons to show open contempt for God, for God's laws and for God's tabernacle. Showing contempt for his commandments is one way to show contempt for God. Here is what God told Samuel to tell Eli.

1 Samuel 2:30-31 Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'I said indeed that your house, and the house of your father, should walk before me forever.' But now the LORD says, 'Be it far from me; for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off your arm, and the arm of your fathers house, that there shall not be an old man in your house'.

This makes it clear that if we despise God and deliberately break His commandments, He can and will revoke a promise. When this happens, God has not changed, people have.

IN THOSE CASES WHERE A PROPHECY HASN'T BEEN FULFILLED YET, EITHER THE PROPHECY IS GOING TO HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE OR ELSE THE PEOPLE INVOLVED DID NOT FULFILL GOD'S CONDITIONS AND SO HE REVOKED THE PROPHECY.

Speaking to King David, God tells him that his dynasty will last forever, if David's successors remain faithful to God.

1 Chronicles 28:6-7 He said to me, 'Solomon, your son, shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. I will establish his kingdom forever, if he continues to do my commandments and my ordinances, as at this day.'

Solomon started off well. When God offered to give him a gift, Solomon humbly asked for wisdom to rule the kingdom. God was very pleased with him and blessed Solomon more than any king or ruler in all history.

1 Kings 3:9-13 Give your servant therefore an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this your great people?" The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself long life, neither have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice; behold, I have done according to your word. Behold, I have given you a wise and an understanding heart; so that there has been none like you before you, neither after you shall any arise like you. I have also given you that which you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there shall not be any among the kings like you, all your days.

Solomon asked for wisdom to rule the nation. He did not ask for wisdom to guide his own life. He thought it OK to marry a lot of foreign women, it was good political strategy to marry the daughters of the rulers of several surrounding countries, after all, who would attack his own son-in-law? Moses had said not to do this, but Solomon thought he could bend the rules.

1 Kings 11:1-4 Now king Solomon loved many foreign women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the

LORD said to the children of Israel, "You shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon joined to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it happened, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

The result was that Solomon's wives led him astray and God withdrew his blessings. When Solomon died, God split the kingdom into the Northern Kingdom, called Israel and the Southern Kingdom, Judah, with Solomon's son inheriting only the Southern Kingdom. The people of the northern kingdom turned away from God, so after several hundred years of sending them prophets and giving them chance after chance to repent:

2 Kings 18:11-12 The king of Assyria carried Israel away to Assyria, and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, because they didn't obey the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it.

So here is a case of unfulfilled prophecy. The people of the northern kingdom, whose capital was Samaria, did not turn back to God in captivity so they were not restored to their land like the people of Judah were. After being carried off by the Assyrians, the people of Samaria never returned, they did not turn back to God.

Ezekiel 16:53 I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and the captivity of your captives in their midst;

When they were in captivity in Babylon the people of Judah returned to God and so God helped them to return to the land of Judah.

Deuteronomy 30:1-3 It shall happen, when all these things have come on you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations, where the LORD your God has driven you, and shall return to the LORD your God, and shall obey his voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul; that then the LORD your God will turn your captivity, and have compassion on you, and will return and gather you from all the peoples, where the LORD your God has scattered you.

By the way, God did keep his promise to David, even though some of David's descendants went astray. From the lineage of David he raised up a king, Jesus

Christ, whose kingdom, is forever.

Romans 1:1-4 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the Good News of God, which he promised before through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

The Prophet Daniel told of God's plan to establish an eternal kingdom during the time of the Roman empire. This happened in Acts 2 when the church, God's kingdom, was started.

Daniel 2:44 In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

The bottom line is that not every prophecy in the Bible is going to be fulfilled, but some will, so we need to be ready. Here is one which I hope to be ready for.

Hebrews 10:27-28 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Let's look at another prophecy which God will fulfill in His own good time, no-one knows when. For many years the atheist community used the following verses as proof that science and the Bible cannot agree. "Water can't burn." Then Einstein and his theory of relativity changed our thinking, matter is just another form of energy, elements can melt.

2 Peter 3:9-11 The Lord is not slow concerning his promise, as some count slowness; but is patient with us, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore since all these things will be destroyed like this, what kind of people ought you to be in holy living and godliness,

Here is a prophecy from Paul to comfort us when a loved one who is a Christian dies.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. So we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Let's close with Jesus' invitation to all men from the last part of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" He who hears, let him say, "Come!" He who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Make God your choice!