

How do we know that prophecy has been fulfilled?

The prophet Isaiah wrote:

Behold, the former things have come to pass,

And new things I declare;

Before they spring forth I tell you of them." Is 42:9

God gives prophecy so that men will repent. Sadly, many do not. Jesus said, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead (Lk 16:31)."

Prophecy, or inspired foretelling of events, deals with God's moral requirements.

The prophet Jeremiah warned those who prophesy falsely.

He wrote:

Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the Lord, "and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the Lord. Je 23:32, NASB

Whereas believers look forward to blessings to come; sinners will see only tribulation and finally Hell in their future.

Why study prophecy? The apostle Paul wrote: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness (2 Ti 3:16, NASB)."

For the Hebrew prophecy consists of patterns repeated with a final, ultimate fulfillment centered in Christ (Lk 24:26, 27, 44). Repeated patterns in history are not a coincidence.

Carol Brooks wrote:

One has to very carefully distinguish between what is merely incidental and what God designed as a preview—something that is not always easy. Not only does a Biblical event or person have to clearly serve as a pattern for another person or event, but there is always a graduation from type to antitype—from the lesser to the greater. For example, when in Romans 5:14 Paul said that Adam "is a type (*typos*) of Him (Christ) that was to come", Adam was obviously the lesser type and Jesus Christ the greater antitype.

Biblical types can be classified as: ritual, personal and historical.

Brooks explained:

Ritual Types: All the tangible aspects of the Temple and worship in the Old Testament, i.e. the Altar, the Offerings, the Tabernacle etc. existed for a reason, to prepare the way for the New and more perfect New Covenant.

...Personal Types: The lives and experiences of certain people in the Bible most often reflected some aspect of Christ and His mission. For example, Aaron was a type of the Lord Jesus as High

Priest. Joseph's life paralleled that of Jesus in many ways—he was betrayed for money, falsely accused of a crime but eventually became Pharaoh's right hand man. He was placed over all Egypt without whose permission no one in the country could do anything. Similarly, Jesus who sits at the right hand of the Father and will rule the coming kingdom.

...Historical Types: The call of Abraham, the deliverance of the nation of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, the wilderness journey, and the conquest of Canaan are all examples of historical types.

If one has failed to believe past prophecies; perhaps, he will believe history future (Ps 2:5). Some prophecies have yet to be fulfilled (e.g. the two witnesses, the Day of the Lord and the sixth seal, etc.).

Brooks continued:

The Two Witnesses¹: ...It is entirely possible that, as many commentators believe, one of the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11:3 might be 'Elijah'. Again, this does not necessarily mean the literal, historical Elijah, but simply someone who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah and performs a similar function.

The Day of the Lord²: ...[A] simple comparison of the prophecy and the events on Pentecost makes it quite clear that not everything spoken of by the prophet came to pass. While the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by some remarkable signs and wonders—no prophecies were made, no one dreamed dreams or saw visions. The promised awesome displays of celestial phenomena were conspicuous by their absence. There was no blood, fire, or pillars of smoke[.] The sun did not turn to darkness nor the moon to blood.

The Sixth Seal³: ...In the foretold events of the End of Days, the breaking of the Sixth Seal is the first time that the wrath of God is mentioned. Nothing that went before had anything to do with His judgment...

After the tribulation the Millennium will begin (Re 20:1–10).

The world has yet to witness: the seven trumpets⁴, the Abomination of Desolation,⁵ the destruction of Jerusalem and other catastrophic events.

Jesus warned that his followers would be persecuted (Mt 10:17-23a).

Brooks continued:

Joshua and the Seven Trumpets: Joshua 6 and Revelation 10 and 11 both contain the same numerical pattern.

The Abomination of Desolation: ...In Matthew 24:15-33 Jesus told His disciples that when they saw the Abomination of Desolation...spoken of by the prophet Daniel, then they would know the

¹ Re 11:1-14

² Joe 2:31, Ac 2:20

³ Re 6:12-17

⁴ Re chapters 8 - 11

⁵ Mt 24:15-16

end is near. "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand). Mt 24:15 NASB

The Destruction of Jerusalem and Future Catastrophic Events: ...Matthew 24 has always been considered one of the most difficult chapters to understand. Some have concluded that there is a fairly straightforward division of the chapter. Verses 4-34 have to do with the "generation" that was contemporary with the Lord and the destruction of Jerusalem, while verses 35-51 allude to the end of days.

Jesus' Partially Fulfilled Prophecy: ...In Matthew 10, Jesus sends the apostles out in pairs, warning them about certain perils that they would face⁶:

But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues; and you will even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. "But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes. Mt 10:17-23a NASB

Christians recognize patterns in history and in their own lives as God works through their circumstances. God guides his people (Ps 119:105). His word is living and active (He 4:12).

Believers watch for all that God has in store for those who love him and for those who do not.

⁶ Brooks, Carol. Reasons to Believe: Prophecy and Typology. InPlainSite.org. 6 Nov 19: http://www.inplainsite.org/html/prophecy_and_typology.html