

End Times

1. How Can We Know about the Future?

A. The Bible and the Future

1. The Bible is the inerrant, verbally inspired Word of God.

If we want to know the future, we need a source of information that will always give us the right information about it. If we rely on sources that do not always give the correct prediction, then we risk making terrible mistakes with our lives and our money. Either the Bible is a reliable source because it is the revelation of God, or it isn't. There is no middle ground. Either we can rely on it, or we can't. The Bible claims that we can rely on it.

- a. St. Peter wrote, "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." {2 Peter 1:21}
- b. St. Paul wrote, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." {2 Timothy 3:16-17}
- c. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you." {Jeremiah 30:2}

2. Only God knows the future

The LORD knows the future because He is in the future, just as He is in the present and in the past. For Him to say what will happen in the future is like someone looking through a doorway and telling us what is happening in the next room. In Isaiah 41:21-24 the LORD taunted the false gods by daring them to tell the future even though they could do nothing even in the present.

- a. King David wrote, "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them." {Psalm 139:16}
- b. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The LORD of hosts has sworn: 'As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.'" {Isaiah 14:24}
- c. Isaiah quoted God when he wrote, "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.'" {Isaiah 46:9b-10}
- d. "Then David said [to God], 'Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?' And the LORD said, 'They will surrender you.'" {1 Samuel 23:12} This shows that God knows the conditional future.

3. God reveals some aspects of the future

The LORD reveals the future when it advances His plan of salvation, but not for the mere curiosity of His people. Faith means relying on the LORD being in control even though he has not given us a complete roadmap of what will happen. The LORD does not feel the need to continually prove Himself to His creatures.

- a. “Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, ‘Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage. When you depart from me today,’ When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day.” {1 Samuel 10:1-9}
- b. Isaiah quoted God when he wrote, “Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.” {Isaiah 42:9}
- c. Jesus said, “See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.” {Matthew 24:25}
- d. “Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the LORD directed me.’” {Matthew 27:9-10}

4. The only sure source for information about the future

- a. All prophecy comes from the LORD.

One can only guess about the outcome of anything that can have multiple outcomes. The laws of probability will dictate how often one is right. Sometimes the odds of predicting a winner are increased by other factors, which allow those who understand the real situation to regularly do better than those who don’t. Yet only the prophecies of the LORD are always correct and reliable because He can see precisely the events about which He speaks.

- Isaiah wrote, “When they say to you, ‘Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,’ should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” {Isaiah 8:19-20}
- James warned against presuming what the future will bring. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the LORD wills, we will live and do this or that.’” {James 4:13-15}

- b. The prophecies are numerous.

There are thousands of Bible verses which make some mention of the future, although care must be taken not to read divine prophesy into situations where the common laws of nature produce the expected result. While even the ordinary things around us happen only at the direction of the LORD, it is His accuracy in predicting the abnormal that sets Him apart from imposters.

- “I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done.” {Isaiah 46:9-10}

- c. The prophecies are completely reliable.

The LORD is never wrong because He is omniscient. No one else is omniscient, not even the angels and the demons, although the latter like to pretend they are.

- “For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.” {Habakkuk 2:3}

5. The Bible is filled with prophecies that came true.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled. Some have claimed that these were added or adjusted after the fact to make this to be the case. Yet, consider the ones about Christ that could not be faked because they are documented as having existed before Christ. Contemplating the nature of these prophecies, there is no reason to doubt any of the Old Testament prophecies.

- a. Virgin birth – “Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” {Isaiah 7:14}
- b. Born in Bethlehem – “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” {Micah 5:2}
- c. Ministry in Galilee – “But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.” {Isaiah 9:1-2}
- d. Healing the sick and releasing prisoners – “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor.” {Isaiah 61:1-2a}
- e. Redemption of mankind – “Behold, my servant shall act wisely;...yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.” {Isaiah 52:13-53:12}
- f. Division of clothes – “I can count all my bones – they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” {Psalm 22:17-18}
- g. Resurrection – “For you will not abandon my soul to the grave, nor let your holy one see corruption.” {Psalm 16:10}

B. Looking for the future in the wrong places

1. Methods

- a. Mediums, Occultists

When not faking their craft, these people are in league with evil spirits because the LORD does not impart information through such people but rather condemns them.

- “Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.” {Leviticus 19:31}

b. Divination (entrails, flight of birds, tea leaves, cards, palms, etc.)

The use of auguries to tell the future has existed for a long time and is a practice of deceit. The only signs that the LORD gives in nature are the signs that are visible to all (e.g., clouds bringing rain). That one can be trained to take information out of something that has no information is an art worthy of P.T. Barnum.

- Contrast: Jesus said, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’” {Matthew 16:2-3}
- With: Moses wrote, “There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer.” {Deuteronomy 18:10}

c. Astrology

That the configuration of the heavens guides the things on earth is a long-standing myth. That it is believed by educated people shows how insecure people are. It is dangerous because it can influence decision-making when it is followed, thereby overriding God-given wisdom.

- “You are wearied with your many counsels; let them stand forth and save you, those who divide the heavens, who gaze at the stars, who at the new moons make known what shall come upon you. Behold, they are like stubble; the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame.” {Isaiah 47:13-14}

2. Seers

- a. The Oracle at Delphi – Pythia was the high priestess of Apollo at Delphi. She gave ambiguous answers to questions so that the answer would always be right in retrospect.
- b. Nostradamus – a French astrologer, physician, and mystic of the 16th Century who wrote 4-line obscure prophecies, which people ever since have tried to attach to current events.
- c. Jeane Dixon – a 20th Century American mystic and psychic who was a columnist and author. She got a few major predictions right but was far more often wrong.
- d. Nancy Reagan – President Ronald Reagan’s wife was an avid follower of astrology and sometimes got her husband to follow her lead.
- e. News columnists – No matter where one looks in American society, one finds a lot of people making a living by predicting the economy, the stock market, political events, and the effects of climate change. Each of these people taunt their successes, but few present to the public a scorecard containing both their correct and incorrect predictions. While careful study of a specific issue may improve the chances that a forecaster will get a more accurate result, no one has the perfect score a divine prophet would have.
- f. Even when there is a scientific basis for predicting future events, there is the problem of the natural phenomenon of “chaos.” All natural processes are defined in terms of non-linear differential equations. We rarely know all the terms in the equations, much less their values and coefficients, and often the equations cannot be solved in a closed form.