

TIM LAHAYE & THOMAS ICE

CHARTING THE END TIMES



HARVEST PROPHECY

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CHARTING THE END TIMES

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In Memory of

Clarence Larkin, a mechanical engineer and architect turned minister at 34 years of age, who in 1920 published the seminal chart book of the twentieth century, *Dispensational Truth*. It has helped more ministers, Bible teachers, and earnest students who desire to rightly divide the Word of truth than any book of its kind.

Also, Dr. David L. Cooper, Th.M., Ph.D., founder and president of the Biblical Research Society, whose masterful chart book *The World's Greatest Library Graphically Illustrated*, published in 1942, has helped mold the thinking of both authors.

Dedicated to

The millions of readers of the *LEFT BEHIND*® series of end-times novels who want to study more in-depth the many prophetic scriptures upon which those stories are based...and to Christians everywhere who want to know the wonderful Holy Scriptures. Prophecy is history written in advance. Only the Bible has dependable prophetic truth. These charts are the culmination of many years of careful study by the authors and their many prophecy-scholar colleagues in the Pre-Trib Research Center.

And of course, this book is primarily dedicated to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who alone is “the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10b). Only a study of prophecy gives Him His rightful place in history, both past and future.

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WHY A CHART BOOK ON BIBLE PROPHECY?

There's a popular proverb that suggests "a picture is worth a thousand words." If that is true, a good chart is worth a thousand words about Bible prophecy. The value of charts is that they help us to see the timing of prophetic events and their relationship to each other. With a chart, we can summarize a subject or theme that, in written form, might take pages to explain. In this book, you will find virtually all the key themes of Bible prophecy in chart form.

One of the distinctives of biblical Christianity is that God knows and reveals the future (Isaiah 46:8-11). Only God can do that. Thus, the future is settled, and not open to change. We can look at the charts in this book with an assurance that the biblical teachings they portray are guaranteed to take place. We can have confidence that God will continue to carry out His plan for the ages, and we who are Christians have a significant part in that plan.

Our prayer is that *Charting the End Times* will enable anyone interested in Bible prophecy to learn the prophetic teachings of Scripture in a more meaningful way.

1. UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PLAN FOR THE AGES

For reasons known only to God, He determined to populate eternity with a race of human beings who choose to worship Him by obeying His will. He created man in His own image with a mind superior to that of any other living creature, and He breathed into that man “the breath of life and he became a living soul.” From that first man, named Adam, God extracted a rib and made it into a woman, whom Adam named Eve, to be a complementary companion to Adam. Together, by the Creator’s design, they possessed the capability of procreating additional human beings like themselves with an eternal soul and a free will, enabling them also to obey or disobey God as they choose. Perhaps the most incredible part of this creation miracle is that they would also have the ability of passing the gift of procreation and free will on to their children for thousands of generations.

The Creator God then put man and his wife in a beautiful garden, which He called Eden. There He placed two special trees, which He designated “the tree of life” and “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” They were expressly forbidden to eat of the latter tree or they would die, but they were not forbidden to eat of the tree of life. It is thought by many that if they had eaten of the tree of life first, before eating of the forbidden tree, their test would have been over and sin would not have entered the human race. Instead, they heeded the voice of the tempter and disobeyed God by

eating of the forbidden tree. By this act, sin entered the human race.

God, in His marvelous grace, began revealing His will to man right from the beginning, in Genesis 3:15, which is the first prophecy related to God’s redemptive plan for the salvation of mankind. From there onward, through the pens of many writers, God continued to reveal more of His plan, which we find in the Bible.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

At some point in the past, one of God’s special angelic creations, Lucifer, the “anointed cherub” (Ezekiel 28:14), who was originally created perfect in all his ways (as were the other angels and man), became rebellious. Lucifer later enticed one-third of the angels of heaven and Adam and Eve to do the same. They had all received a free will and they used it to rebel against God. We are given only scant details of this rebellion, which resulted in Lucifer (also called Satan) being cast out of heaven along with the angels that joined his rebellion (Revelation 12). He came down to the earth, which was designated as his special province, where he became the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) and “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). This ignited the conflict of the ages between God and Satan as both sought the worship of each man and woman on earth. As prophecy teaches, Satan, the

master deceiver of mankind, will eventually be totally expelled from heaven along with all those who follow him, both angelic and human. After the Millennial kingdom of Christ and Satan's final rebellion, they will all be thrown into "the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14).

Why God placed mankind on this earth—where fallen Satan had access to people's minds and will—we are not told. Given the Creator's objective to develop a race of people with a free will who voluntarily choose to worship and serve Him for eternity, this world then became a proving ground or testing place where every person must make his or her choice as to who they would follow—God or Satan. Satan, described by Jesus Christ as "the deceiver" and "a liar," is not honest in the way he approaches men. He never specifically asks mankind to be his servant or to worship him (but he will in the Tribulation period). Instead, he entices man with ideas like, "Do your own thing" or "You can be like God." His temptation of Eve in Genesis 3 is a perfect example of the dishonest way he deceives all people. By contrast, God is truth; He always approaches men and women honestly. In every age He forthrightly asks people to obey and serve Him. In the Old Testament He gave commandments to the children of Israel, and He promised to bless them if they kept the commands and curse them if they did not. The entire history of Israel is an illustration of the fulfillment of God's promises according to the people's choices and their behavior.

THE CONFLICT OF THE AGES

Satan's hatred for mankind becomes clear as we examine the conflict of the ages as it is revealed in the Bible. In every age, Satan has attempted to destroy mankind, whereas God has sought to save people. Adam and Eve had something Satan did not have—an eternal spirit that was able to respond to God. When Satan enticed them to sin by disobeying God, that spirit died. This necessitated the redemption of mankind through the shedding of innocent blood. Eventually God sent His Son to earth to become man's redeemer, the only means of eternal salvation for man by the sacrifice of that Son on the cross. From then on all mankind could, by choosing to receive Christ and trusting Him, have their spirit "born again" (John 3:3,7).

The complete story of the conflict of the ages between God and Satan for the souls of mankind is too lengthy to include here, but there are some key points in that story. For example, we read about the Flood in Genesis chapters 6–8. Prior to the Flood, people lived to great ages (some lived for 800 or even 900 years). Little is known of this period except that eventually the people on earth rebelled against God and became so morally corrupt and violent that God sent the Flood to destroy all but Noah and his family, who were deemed righteous.

After the Flood, God sent the rainbow as a permanent reminder that He would never again destroy the world by flood. While we have had and still have local floods, some of great severity, God, in His mercy, has kept His word, and we have never again had a worldwide flood.

Soon after the great Flood, Satan raised up Nimrod and his mother to establish idolatry in the city of Babel, which is second only to Jerusalem as the most influential city in the world. Every false religion, particularly pagan forms of idolatry, can be traced back to Babel, a city that is now being rebuilt (according to prophecy) and will one day be destroyed forever. Because of man's wrong intentions in building the tower of Babel, God brought confusion upon the people by causing them to speak different languages. This resulted in the dispersion of people throughout the earth according to language groups.

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

Later, God called Abraham from the idolatrous city of Ur and promised him a new land and his own people. Abraham and his wife Sarah did not have their promised first child until both were too old to have children. God clearly brought about a miracle when they gave birth to Isaac, who was the start of a new nation called *Israel*. Through their seed God would bless the peoples of the world; it was through Israel that God would send the Messiah to be the lamb of sacrifice and to bring redemption to all who call on His name.

God also planned to bless the people of the world through the Hebrew nation *if* they would obey Him. To them God gave the commission of being the torchbearers of the Old Testament, and He placed them in what today is known as the Holy Land. This land

acted as a bridge between the continents to the north and south. It was here that the merchants and kings of Israel could be a witness to the polytheistic nations of the world. God promised that those who worshiped and served Him would be incredibly blessed beyond anything known in other nations, so that visitors could take the message of God back to their homelands—much like the Queen of Sheba did during the reign of Solomon. Because of Israel's access to the silk trade route in the Orient, the Hebrews could have even influenced China and the Orient if they had remained faithful.

God wanted to be Israel's king, and He provided His leadership through priests, prophets, and judges, many of whom wrote the revelation of His will for the Israelites and for future generations. This revelation is what we now know as the Holy Scriptures. These holy writings contain man's only truly authentic record of history, instructions on how to live, and prophecies for the future. All Israel had to do to experience incredible blessing was to worship God alone and manifest that worship by obeying and serving Him. Instead, the Israelites were duped by Satan to seek a king from among their own people—a king who eventually turned the people away from depending on God and serving Him to depending on and serving an earthly king and the physical government he provided. God then chose another man to become king—King David, “the man after God's own heart.” During David's reign and the first part of the reign of his son Solomon, the nation of Israel went back to obeying God and received His unprecedented blessings.

Eventually both the ten northern tribes of Israel and the two southern tribes of Judah turned from worshiping God, and the majority of the people became idolaters. It was because of their sin of idolatry that God raised up King Nebuchadnezzar to take the Jews captive and transport them to Babylon for 70 years. He did this to prove once and for all that He alone was God and He alone could predict the future, as taught by the Hebrew prophets.

FROM JESUS CHRIST ONWARD

Approximately 400 years after the close of the Old Testament, the greatest of all fulfilled prophecies occurred: the birth, life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah. At least 109 prophecies were fulfilled in His 33-year life, fulfilling God's promise of almost 4000 years earlier that the seed of the woman (Eve) would bruise Satan's head. That happened through Jesus' death on the cross for the sins of the whole world. When Jesus cried out on the cross, “It is finished,” He did not mean the conflict of the ages was over. He meant that the temporary sacrificial system of the Old Testament was no longer needed and that now a permanent way of escaping the deception of

Satan and the consequences of sin had opened up—the way of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. In addition, Jesus promised to send His Holy Spirit to indwell believers. This would not make them impervious to the deceptions of Satan and the world, but it did mean believers would have a supernatu-

ral power with which to combat the power and deception of Satan if they walked with God and depended on Him.

This world has not become a perfect place since then; in every generation, people have had to choose whom they will serve. Those who choose to follow God have the benefit of the New Testament, which contains further revelations and prophecies inspired by the Holy Spirit. And, with the help of the indwelling of that same Spirit, believers have been able to experience victory over Satan and his legions of demons.

By contrast, the world has continued along its same destructive path. Satan has indwelt kings, dictators, presidents, and other governmental leaders. Many of these leaders have been among the sources of man's earthly struggles. And the progress of time has not seen the progress of mankind. In the recent twentieth century, our so-called civilized society distinguished itself as the most barbaric in the history of mankind. Modern-day governments and their wars have caused the

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deaths and murders of almost 180 million souls in this century alone—more deaths than in all the previous wars of history combined! Even today, the nightly news is filled with expressions of man’s inhumanity to his fellow man through oppressive and dictatorial governments or government leaders.

The new birth in Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit, together with the 27 New Testament books of divine revelation that help Christians to grow spiritually, seem to have lessened somewhat the plight of man during this conflict of the ages. Millions of Christians have used the help of these resources and the church. In reference to the church, Jesus said, “The gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18). Thus Christians are protected to the extent that Satan’s “wiles” cannot destroy them. One of the affirmations that Satan is a defeated enemy is God’s prophetic plan for the second coming of Jesus Christ. In the first three centuries of its existence, the church had such a zeal and spiritual fire because of its belief in Christ’s return to establish His kingdom on this earth that Christianity became the dominant religion and was adopted as the state religion by the emperor of Rome in A.D. 313.

Emperor Constantine meant well when he merged religion and government, but Satan quickly discovered that what he could not halt by persecution he was able to stifle by indulgence. At first Constantine ordered 50 new copies of the Holy Scriptures to replace those that the persecutors of the faith before him had burned. Then he gave church leaders the former pagan temples as places of worship.

By the fourth century, the Church of Rome began to accept some of the traditions and teachings of the Babylonian paganism that had been the official religious practices of Rome prior to and after the time of Christ. In the fifth century, Augustine and his Greek followers, who were educated in pagan humanism and fatalism, brought in the most powerful enemy of true Christianity, the allegorizing of Scripture. It is interesting that the Greek “Christian” theologian, Origen, was branded a heretic by the third-century church for allegorizing Scripture, whereas the fifth-century church officially accepted this same method for teaching prophecy from Augustine. This acceptance of allegorizing prophecy was eventually applied to all of Scripture. This opened the door to the eventual elevation of pagan religion to

the same level as scriptural truth. This, in turn, ushered in the Dark Ages, an 1100-year period during which the Bible was kept from the common people. Not until the Protestant Reformation during the sixteenth century did the tide turn. By the providence of God, the invention of the printing press and the work of translating the Bible into the languages of the common people throughout Europe once again ignited the church. Chief among the reasons for the amazing growth of the church during the past four centuries has been the revival of interest in end-times prophecy, which naturally resulted as people began reading the Bible for themselves and believing it literally. To this day, churches and Christians who take the Bible literally tend to be premillennial, believing that God will win the conflict of the ages when His Son Jesus returns to this earth as the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:16). He will then set up His righteous kingdom on earth for 1000 years, and that will be followed by an eternity best described as heaven.

LOOKING TO ETERNITY

There are many other details of the prophetic future that we will examine in this book. We would be remiss, however, if we did not point out two important truths about the time of man on this earth. One is that all mankind has two things in common. First, every person must make his or her own choice about God during their lifetime. From Adam and Eve to the last person living during the final rebellion described in Revelation 20:11-15, each person must decide who they will worship and serve—God, or the gods of this world (including idols, money, fame, or fortune).

The second fact is that there are only two places to spend eternity: heaven, where Jesus Himself is preparing a place for Christians, or hell, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. If you have not made your choice yet, we would urge you to believe that Jesus died for your sins according to the Scriptures, that He rose again the third day, and that you can be saved by confessing your sins to Him and inviting Him to come into your life through His Holy Spirit. Like all the other people who have heard this message, you have a choice to make. Please remember that your eternal destiny will be determined by that choice.

2. WHAT IS BIBLE PROPHECY?

A *prophet* is defined as “one who speaks on behalf of another,” and a *prophecy* is the message that he conveys. Bible prophecy is God’s infallible message to man, spoken or written by prophets specially chosen by God. Today, many people think prophecy deals only with predictions about the future, but that is not the case. In a broad sense, prophecy includes any aspect of God’s revelation to man as recorded in the 66 books of the Bible. However, in this book, our focus will be upon predictive prophecy, especially that which is still future in relation to our own day.

Prophecy is history written in advance. The Lord said through Isaiah the prophet, “Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure’; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it” (Isaiah 46:9-11). The Lord determines what will happen in history and then He brings it to pass. Considering that God can do this, it is not difficult for Him to tell us, in advance, what will take place.

The apostle Peter wrote, “We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). False religions and superstitions are built upon clever tales, but Christianity is built upon nothing less than God’s revelation of

Himself to mankind as found in the Bible. Peter went on to call biblical prophecy “the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19). Why can we place all our trust in God’s prophetic Word? Because, as Peter concludes, prophecy is not a matter of the human interpretation of historical events: “Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Prophecy provides Christians with an outline of God’s program of the future. And because hundreds of specific prophecies have already been literally fulfilled—most of them in relation to the first coming of Christ—we know that all the prophecies about the future will be fulfilled literally in the end times, and Christ’s return will be fulfilled literally as well. A faithful believer is to be found watching and waiting for our Lord’s coming.