

RON RHODES

40 DAYS  
THROUGH BIBLE  
PROPHECY



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## **40 Days Through Bible Prophecy**

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# Contents

40 Days Through Bible Prophecy . . . . .	9
Day 1 Prophets and Prophecy: What You Need to Know . . .	15
Day 2 Why Prophecy Is a Big Deal . . . . .	21
Day 3 Guidelines for Interpreting Prophecy . . . . .	27
Day 4 God's Prophetic Covenants . . . . .	35
Day 5 God's Purpose for the Present Age . . . . .	41
Day 6 Israel's Rebirth: A Super-Sign . . . . .	47
Day 7 The Escalation of Apostasy in the End Times . . . . .	53
Day 8 The Decline of the United States . . . . .	59
Day 9 Millions Vanish in the Blink of an Eye . . . . .	65
Day 10 The Restrainer's Removal and the Rise of the Antichrist . . . . .	71
Day 11 Believers Will Be Resurrected and Glorified . . . . .	77
Day 12 The Judgment Seat of Christ . . . . .	83
Day 13 Russia and Muslim Nations Invade Israel . . . . .	89
Day 14 The Antichrist and His Covenant with Israel . . . . .	95
Day 15 The Rebuilt Temple and Signs of the Times . . . . .	101
Day 16 The 144,000 Jewish Evangelists . . . . .	107
Day 17 The Two Prophetic Witnesses . . . . .	113
Day 18 The Seven Seal Judgments Are Unleashed . . . . .	119
Day 19 The Seven Trumpet Judgments Are Unleashed . . . . .	125
Day 20 The Rise of Religious New Babylon . . . . .	131
Day 21 The Antichrist's Wound and Apparent Resurrection . . . . .	137

Day 22 Upheavals at the Midpoint of the Tribulation . . . . . 143

Day 23 The Antichrist Desolates the Jewish Temple . . . . . 149

Day 24 The False Prophet Exalts the Antichrist . . . . . 155

Day 25 The Jewish Remnant Flees Jerusalem . . . . . 161

Day 26 The “Great Tribulation” Begins . . . . . 167

Day 27 The Mark of the Beast Is Enforced . . . . . 173

Day 28 The Seven Bowl Judgments Are Unleashed . . . . . 179

Day 29 Armageddon Begins:  
                   Commercial New Babylon Is Destroyed . . . . . 185

Day 30 Armageddon Continues:  
                   The Jews Are Targeted for Destruction . . . . . 191

Day 31 The Glorious Appearing of Jesus Christ . . . . . 197

Day 32 The Final Battle of Armageddon Erupts . . . . . 203

Day 33 The 75-Day Interim Between the Tribulation  
                   and the Millennium . . . . . 209

Day 34 The Millennial Kingdom Begins . . . . . 215

Day 35 Physical and Spiritual Blessings  
                   During the Millennium . . . . . 221

Day 36 Satan’s Final Revolt After the Millennium . . . . . 227

Day 37 The Great White Throne Judgment  
                   and the Lake of Fire . . . . . 233

Day 38 The New Heavens and the New Earth . . . . . 239

Day 39 The New Jerusalem and the Eternal State . . . . . 245

Day 40 Living in Light of Eternity . . . . . 251

                  A Closing Reflection: Stockpiling Your Mind  
                           with God’s Thoughts . . . . . 257

                  Bibliography . . . . . 261

                  Notes . . . . . 267



## 40 Days Through Bible Prophecy

People sometimes ask me why I write so many prophecy books. My answer lies in the following statistics:

- Out of the 23,210 verses in the Old Testament, 6,641 of them are prophetic. *That's 28.5 percent.*
- Out of the 7,914 verses in the New Testament, 1,711 of them are prophetic. *That's 21.5 percent.*
- Merging the Old and New Testaments, some 8,352 of the Bible's 31,124 verses are prophetic. That means **27 percent of the Bible is prophetic.**

*Twenty-seven percent!* That's a considerable portion of the Bible! It indicates to me that Bible prophecy is important to God. For that reason, it is important to me. And that's why I write prophecy books.

Bible prophecy is especially relevant because of what is transpiring today. If these are the “last days,” as I believe they are, then we would expect to see certain developments in the world—developments that relate specifically to the end times as prophesied in Scripture. These developments include a falling away from the truth, the widespread embracing of doctrinal error, a significant moral decline, a growing tolerance for all things evil, and a widespread outbreak of sexual sins and perversions.

We would further expect to see a steady diminishing of religious freedom, the global persecution of God's people, Israel being a sore spot in the world, ever-escalating conflict in the Middle East, efforts

being made toward the rebuilding of the Jewish temple, and the stage being set for a massive Russian/Muslim invasion of Israel. Also expected are the steady rise of globalism, political and economic strides toward establishing a revived Roman Empire, and the emergence of a cashless world in preparation for the antichrist's control of the world economy during the tribulation period.

It is sobering to ponder how all of these, in varying degrees, are trending in our present day—sure indicators that we are living in the end times. They are foreshadowing the events that will transpire during the coming tribulation period.<sup>1</sup> I will address these matters throughout this book.

### **A 40-DAY APPROACH**

The unique feature of this book is that it divides all the various topics related to Bible prophecy into 40 short chapters. The book can easily be completed in 40 days. This means that in just 40 days...

- You will have a good handle on all the major prophetic events that will occur in the future.
- You will become familiar with all the prominent personalities of the end times.
- You will have a good grasp of the proper chronology of prophetic events.
- You will become well familiar with unique terms associated with prophecy—terms like “the rapture,” “the millennial kingdom,” and “the eternal state.”

I will be your tour guide for this journey through prophetic Scripture. I will help you understand what you need to know, while avoiding unnecessary clutter. In addition to concise descriptions and Bible exposition of crucial verses, each day's reading will feature “Fast Facts” on important topics, “Frequently Asked Questions,” “Today's Big Ideas,” and “Today's Transforming Truths.” You will find this approach highly informative, easy to grasp, fast moving, and inspiring.

**Definitions** of essential prophetic terms, **key historical insights**, and **important points** will be highlighted in shadowed boxes.

Once the 40 days are completed, you will not only have a grasp of the main components of Bible prophecy, you will also have a good grasp on other issues that are relevant to your spiritual life. You will come to understand that:

- God truly knows the future.
- The Bible—which is brimming with God’s prophecies of the future—is the Word of God and can be trusted.
- God is in sovereign control of all that occurs in the world.
- God is now providentially guiding human history toward its prophetic culmination.
- God has a plan for humanity—*and He has a plan for you individually.*
- God will one day providentially cause good to triumph over evil.
- There is a new world coming—*the best is yet to come.*
- We will all get body upgrades—*resurrected or glorified bodies that never age, get sick, or die.*
- We will experience a joyful reunion with all our Christian loved ones in heaven.
- The Lord is coming sooner than we think!

You will find that daily exposure of your mind to these glorious scriptural truths over 40 days will help build an eternal perspective in you that will fortify your spiritual life for years to come. *I guarantee it!*

If you are already well acquainted with the study of Bible prophecy, this book will also benefit you. It is good to infuse our minds daily with God’s Word—including God’s prophetic Word. Regular exposure—even *repetitive* exposure—to God’s Word brings great blessing. Joshua

1:8 tells us: “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Proverbs 3:1 instructs: “My son, do not forget my teaching.” The psalmist muses: “I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word” (Psalm 119:15-16). Repetitive exposure to God’s truths virtually lives in such passages. So do not hesitate to review God’s prophetic Word regularly.

## OUR WONDROUS, ALL-KNOWING GOD

In many of my prophecy books, I have emphasized right up front that Bible prophecy finds its origin in God, who alone knows the future. I do this intentionally because people can get so enthralled about knowing the future that they unintentionally fail to fully appreciate God’s greatness in relation to prophecy. Here is something to remember: *The greater your understanding of God’s greatness, the stronger your conviction will be about the prophecies that emanate from Him!*

I could write a book about God’s greatness (and maybe I will one day). However, for now, here is what I want you to know: Because God transcends time—*because He is above time*—He can see the past, present, and future as a single intuitive act. God’s knowledge of all things is from the vantage point of eternity so that all events in the past, present, and future are encompassed in one ever-present “now” to Him. I know that boggles the mind. *The main thing to grasp is that God truly knows the future.*

Scripture reveals God knows all things, both actual and possible (Matthew 11:21-24). He knows all things past (Isaiah 41:22), present (Hebrews 4:13), and future (Isaiah 46:10). Because He knows all things, there can be no increase or decrease in His knowledge. Psalm 147:5 affirms that God’s understanding “is beyond measure.” His knowledge is infinite (Psalm 33:13-15; 139:11-12; 147:5; Proverbs 15:3; Isaiah 40:14; 46:10; Acts 15:18; 1 John 3:20; Hebrews 4:13). Look up these verses—*they will inspire you and bless you!*

Because God’s knowledge is infinite, you and I can trust Bible



prophecy. God wants us to *know for sure* that we can trust Bible prophecy. He does not want there to be any doubt in our minds. He assures us: “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’ ...I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it” (Isaiah 46:9-11).

When I first became a Christian, the thing that convinced me of God’s awesomeness and the trustworthiness of Bible prophecy is that there are over 100 messianic prophecies in the Old Testament that predict specific details relating to the first coming of Jesus. *All of them* were literally fulfilled, to the crossing of the “t” and the dotting of the “i.” For example, the Old Testament prophesied the Messiah would be from the seed of a woman (Genesis 3:15); the offspring of Abraham (Genesis 12:3); from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10); the son of David (Jeremiah 23:5-6); conceived of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14); born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); the heralded Messiah (Isaiah 40:3); the coming King (Zechariah 9:9); the sacrificial lamb who would be crucified for our sins (Isaiah 53); the one who would be pierced in His side (Zechariah 12:10); the one who would die around AD 33 (Daniel 9:24-25); and the one who would rise from the dead (Psalm 2, 16). These—and a multitude of others—were literally fulfilled in Jesus’ first coming.

Since this is true, you can also trust what prophetic Scripture reveals about Christ’s second coming and all the prophetic events that lead up to it. Never doubt it! Drive the stake into the ground today. Affirm with me:

*I know I can trust Bible prophecies regarding the future because God has been 100 percent accurate in all His prophecies in the past. He has set a trustworthy precedent. I will never doubt Him. I will believe whatever He says. It simply remains for me to learn what the Bible teaches about prophecy. Once learned, it will immediately become a firm conviction in my mind. The matter is settled! There is no hesitation. I will trust what I learn about prophecy from the Bible because I believe in a trustworthy God!*

## MY PRAYER FOR YOU

As is true with all my writings, I pray that this book will inform your mind and touch your heart. Christian theology that does not touch the heart—*that fails to resonate with your inner spirit so that it changes you*—has failed at its task. That is one reason I am excited about this book.

My prayer is that this book will cause a paradigm shift in how you view this present world. The more your present life is informed by the glorious truths of the prophetic future, the more you will gain an eternal perspective that will help you navigate the difficult circumstances you might face during this short earthly life.

So, my friend, let's dive into the Scriptures together. Let's be open-minded about what God wants to teach us. And let us resolve to allow God to do His life-changing work in us as His Word saturates our hearts and minds.

Pray along with me:

*Lord, I ask You to open my eyes and enhance my understanding so that I can grasp what You want me to learn in the next 40 days. I also ask You to enable me, by Your Spirit, to apply the truths I learn in my daily life and be guided moment by moment by Your Word. Thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.*



## Day 1

# Prophets and Prophecy: What You Need to Know

Two definitions set the context for today's lesson:

- **Prophecy** involves God's specific revelations about future events and personalities. In modern vernacular, some describe prophecy as "history written in advance." God communicates His prophetic revelations through human prophets.
- The word **prophet** comes from the Hebrew word *nabi*. It carries the idea of "God's spokesman." In the Bible, we find both *major prophets* (the "big wheels") and *minor prophets* (the "small fries").

The major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These guys seem larger than life. The minor prophets—lesser-known but still significant—are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Here's a crucial point:

The prophetic words spoken by the minor prophets are just as much from God as the prophetic words spoken by the major prophets. All messages from God are important.

A comparison of the Old and New Testaments confirms how God spoke through human prophets. In the Old Testament, God's human

prophet spoke forth a prophetic word. Later, in the pages of the New Testament, we discover that God Himself spoke through that prophet. The prophet was literally a *mouthpiece for God*.

To illustrate, the psalmist made a proclamation that begins in Psalm 95:7. Hebrews 3:7 later informs us that the Holy Spirit was speaking through the psalmist in that passage. Likewise, the psalmist made a statement beginning in Psalm 45:6. And Hebrews 1:8 later tells us that God was speaking through the psalmist in that statement.

What about the major and minor prophets? We see the same thing. The major prophet Isaiah made a proclamation in Isaiah 7:14. Matthew 1:22-23 later informs us that the Lord was speaking through Isaiah in that verse. The minor prophet Hosea made a statement in Hosea 11:1. Then Matthew 2:15 later tells us that the Lord was speaking through Hosea in that verse.

I encourage you to look up these verses. In each case, God (or the Lord, or the Holy Spirit) spoke through a prophet acting as a *human mouthpiece* for God.

This convinces me we can trust Bible prophecy. Prophecy comes from God, and everything God says through a prophet will happen (2 Peter 1:21; Isaiah 48:3; 42:8-9). God has never been wrong! He has a 100 percent accuracy rate.

Of course, some phony prophets and psychics have *claimed* to be accurate. In every case, however, these false prophets and psychics have set forth “prophecies” that are incredibly vague. A psychic, for example, might inform a client: “I foresee a romance in your future.” Or perhaps: “Good fortune will come your way in the next few decades.” Or perhaps: “I foresee an illness in the coming years for one of your elderly parents.” It is easy to find “fulfillments” for such generalized “prophecies.”

This is entirely unlike biblical prophecies. As Mark Hitchcock put it, “The biblical prophets did not peddle predictions that were so vague and general they could be adjusted to any situation. The prophecies recorded in the Bible are very precise and so specific that when they

are fulfilled, it's very clear there's something unique and special about them."<sup>2</sup>

I could share many biblical prophecies to prove this point—and before you come to the end of this book, you will become acquainted with a large number of biblical prophecies that prove this point. For now, I will give you three: The Old Testament prophecies that (1) Jesus would be born *in Bethlehem* (Micah 5:2), (2) *by a virgin* (Isaiah 7:14), (3) and that He would be *crucified* (Isaiah 53:12; Zechariah 12:10). There are more than a hundred other precise prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in the person of Jesus. Notice there is nothing vague about these prophecies!

### FAST FACTS ON PROPHETS

God directly chose His prophets (Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:13-16). And they came from all walks of life—from farmers (Amos 7:14) to princes (Genesis 23:6).

God's prophets had two primary roles: (1) On some occasions, they directed their words at specific contemporary situations or problems that needed attention right at the time when they were speaking. (2) On other occasions, they foretold the future based on divine revelation.

The prophets typically prefaced their words with "Thus saith the Lord." Their words were not their own but came from God. Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson tell us: "Their messages were supernatural, not natural. They were derived neither from observation nor intellectual thought, but from knowing God and speaking with Him."<sup>3</sup> The divine source of their words gave their words authority.

These prophets were always 100 percent accurate. If a prophet was not perfectly accurate, the people were to stone him to death as a false prophet (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22).

Because Christ literally fulfilled more than 100 Old Testament prophecies in His first coming, we have strong confidence that the far more numerous prophecies of the second coming will find just as literal fulfillments.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *Are there any prophets today?*

Some Christians claim there are prophets in the church today. Scripture reveals, however, that the church “was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:20). Once a foundation is built, it never needs to be built *again*. Once the foundation of a building is laid, a structure is built *upon it*. In like fashion, the “building” of the church rests on the foundation of the apostles and prophets that lived back in Bible times. We do not need to build any new foundations with new apostles and new prophets.

Some may claim to have a “gift of prophecy” in the loose sense of *forth-telling* (or speaking forth) teachings found in the Bible. But there are certainly no “foretelling” prophets on the level of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel today.

### *Will there be any prophets in the future?*

Though there are not true prophets in the church today on the level of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, that will change during the future seven-year tribulation period. During that time, God will raise up two mighty prophetic witnesses who have the same miraculous powers as Moses and Elijah (Revelation 11:1-15). Some Bible expositors believe the two witnesses may *actually be* Moses and Elijah. Three primary reasons are offered:

1. Moses and Elijah are the two most influential figures in Jewish history. It would therefore make good sense that they are on the scene during the tribulation period, during which God deals heavily with the Jews.
2. Both appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus (Matthew 17:3), thus showing their importance and centrality in God’s unfolding purposes.
3. Both the Old Testament and Jewish tradition expected Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18) and Elijah (Malachi 4:5) to return in the end times.

Of course, we cannot be dogmatic on this. God may raise up two entirely new prophets during this time.

### *Do prophets ever make mistakes?*

Some people claim the prophet Jonah made a mistake when he prophesied God would overthrow Nineveh in 40 days. Jonah's prediction did not come to pass.

Jonah, however, did not make a mistake because he told the Ninevites precisely what God told him to say (Jonah 3:1-2). There was an apparent "repentance clause" built into Jonah's prophecy. The Ninevites understood that God would overthrow Nineveh in 40 days *unless they repented* (verses 5-9). Based on how the Ninevites responded in repentance to Jonah's prophecy, God withdrew the threatened punishment.

Jeremiah 18:7-8 provides an important backdrop. In this passage, God affirmed: "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it." This is the "repentance clause" I was talking about.

Nineveh renounced its evil, and God responded with mercy (see Exodus 32:14; 2 Samuel 24:16; Amos 7:3, 6). God always loves to show mercy where repentance is evident.

## TODAY'S BIG IDEAS

- Prophets are God's mouthpieces. God reveals the future through them.
- Prophecies delivered through these prophets are 100 percent accurate.
- Because all the prophecies relating to the first coming of Christ were fulfilled literally, we may expect that all the prophecies of the second coming (and the events leading up to the second coming) will be fulfilled just as literally.

## TODAY'S TRANSFORMING TRUTHS

- The Bible is God's revelation to us, God speaking to us, and God instructing us (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:15-17). About 25 percent of what God reveals in the Bible is prophetic. You can trust every word, sentence, and paragraph of the prophecies found in the Bible.
- God's prophetic plan encompasses not only the world *but also each one of us*. We need to firmly anchor in our minds that God has His eyes on us and has a wonderful plan for our future (Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 32:8; Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 8:28). It is good to begin each day with this recognition.