

# Prophecy :

## The Various Forms And Modes Of Expression



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## Introduction

As we begin this exploration of the concept of Biblical prophecy, let's keep in mind our proposition (discussed in the companion study entitled "The Basis Of Our Epistemology") – one of the greatest evidences of the validity of the Bible as being God's Word comes from its routine use of prophecy. The Bible habitually anticipates history in advance. This quality – unique only to God, who exists outside of the dimension of time altogether – is one of the ways He authenticates His message to us. In fact, Scripture tells us that the evidence that prophecy provides is even more compelling than an eyewitness account.

"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

-2 Peter 1:18-21

Peter, writing the above portion of Scripture, tells us that prophecy is stronger evidence than even eyewitness experience! He, being an eyewitness to Jesus, declared the "more sure word of prophecy" as being the strongest foundation for your faith imaginable.

One of the greatest authentications of the Bible is its multitude of

prophetic content. Not only does prophecy tell us that God exists, it also tells us that He is in control of all things. The future is not unknown to Him. Indeed, He actually controls the future.

Furthermore, because we have witnessed the accuracy of Biblical prophecy to date, we can also be confident in its predictions that have not yet come to pass; we know that they will come to pass, as have all of the previous predictions. In addition, we can trust every other thing that God says because He has accurately foretold the future. This gives us incredibly strong confidence that the One who inspired the Biblical text is reliable, and therefore the Bible as a whole is a reliable and trustworthy source for us. Prophecy is a strong evidence that gives testimony to the existence of God; the God of the Bible.

As we pointed out earlier, prophecy is a quality unique only to God as He dwells outside the boundaries of time itself.

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,  
Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:” -Isaiah 46:9-10

So, we can see from this passage that God actually expresses His uniqueness (He says “...there is none like me...”) by His ability to declare “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done”...in other words, prophecy.

A substantial amount of Biblical content is prophetic, and includes all of human history – from beginning to end – detailed in advance. According to one reckoning by J. Barton Payne in the “Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy,” the Bible contains:

- 8,352 predictive verses of future events (27% of the entire Bible)
- 1,817 predictions, on
- 737 separate matters

-J. Barton Payne, “Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment,” New York: Harper and Row, 1973, pp. 631-682.

The Bible is extensively prophetic; it cannot be thought of in the way many of the uninformed of today attempt to frame it – only as a quaint cataloguing of tribal history!

Prophecy is demonstrated in several forms. In its most commonly recognized style, prophecy involves the foretelling of events that will occur in the future. However, not all prophecies are delivered to us the same way. Some Biblical prophecies are given as utterances or writing, delivered in everything from a simple and straightforward predictive writing style, to exquisite poetry involving a variety of rhetorical devices. Others are given as symbolic visions, and others as prophetic types, shadows, or patterns that deliberately prefigure future fulfillment events.

It is important to recognize that the Hebrew perception of prophecy is that it not only involves prediction, but largely also the detailing of future events through anticipatory types, shadows, and patterns (Hebrews 8:5). What do we mean by a “type”? Put simply, when you go to build or establish

something in the natural world (such as a building or a car), you typically first create a “prototype” to act as a model that precedes the ultimate fulfillment of your planned construct. This word prototype is really what we mean by a “prophetic type.” A type is a copy, a pattern, or a model that anticipates an even greater future reality that will act as the ultimate fulfillment (called the “antitype”). We will further examine this concept in great detail ahead.

## Forms Of Prophecy

Let's now begin to dig deeper into this subject of prophecy. We will examine the two major forms of prophecy used in the Bible...

### 1. Predictive Prophecy:

Predictive prophecy involves the announcement of events before they occur. The Bible makes a habit of detailing everything from personal events to human history in advance. One example of predictive prophecy is demonstrated in Isaiah 23 (715 B.C.) and Ezekiel 26 (588 B.C.) concerning future events involving the city of Tyre (located on the Mediterranean coast of modern-day Lebanon).

Here is a list of only seven of these predictions, along with a brief detailing of what history records eventually happened:

- 1) The Prophecy: Nebuchadnezzar (the Chaldeans) will destroy the mainland city of Tyre (Isa. 23:13, Ez. 26:8).

What Happened: Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to mainland Tyre in 585 B.C., and overthrew it in 573 B.C., and the people of Tyre retreated to an island half a mile off the shore, and built up a city there.

- 2) The Prophecy: At the end of 70 years, Tyre will recover and return to business (Isa. 23:15-17).

What Happened: 70 years later, when the Persians overthrew Babylon, the island-Tyre recovered to prosper fairly well.

- 3) The Prophecy: Tyre would give some of her earnings to the Lord (Isa. 23:18).

What Happened: Cyrus, king of Persia, forced island-Tyre to contribute materials to rebuild God's Temple in Jerusalem.

- 4) The Prophecy: Many nations will come against Tyre (Ez. 26:3).

What Happened: The Assyrians and Egyptians attacked Tyre, and Alexander the Great (Greece) brought military forces from Sidon, Aradus, Byblus, Rhodes, Soli, Mallos, Lycia, Macedon and Cyprus.

- 5) The Prophecy: The rubble of the city will be thrown into the sea (Ez. 26:12).

What Happened: Alexander's forces took the stones and rubble of fallen mainland Tyre, and threw it into the sea, to build a causeway out to the island-city of Tyre.

- 6) The Prophecy: Tyre will be scraped flat like the top of a rock (Ez. 26:4).

What Happened: To smooth out the causeway, the loose topsoil and “dust” was scraped off and added to the causeway.

- 7) The Prophecy: Tyre will finally be destroyed and never be rebuilt and will be a place for the spreading of nets (Ez. 26:14 and 26:5).

What Happened: Alexander reduced island-Tyre to ruins in 332 B.C., and although people tried to rebuild it, island-Tyre was completely destroyed by the Saracens in 1291 A.D. Though any current map of the area will show a city named Tyre in that general area, the modern Tyre is not the rebuilt city of ancient Tyre. The flat-topped site where the ancient ruins used to be, has never been rebuilt, despite a flowing spring of fresh water running through it that would be able to support a large modern city. Today, that flat site is still only a haven for fishing boats and for the spreading and drying of fishing nets.

-Josh McDowell, “A Ready Defense,” comp. Bill Wilson, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

-Grant R. Jeffrey, “The Signature of God,” rev. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2010, pp. 165-171.

So, predictive prophecy is simply the foretelling of future events. Sometimes predictive prophecy is very forward and plain (such as the example above), and sometimes it involves the use of symbolism (such as much of Revelation) or poetry (such as portions of the Psalms).

## 2. Typological Prophecy (Types/Shadows/Patterns):

A second type of prophecy is typological prophecy, involving what are often referred to as anticipatory types, shadows, or patterns. There are types and antitypes. The type anticipates the future antitype. Paul highlights this in his letter to the Corinthians:

“Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” -1 Corinthians 10:11

The word translated “examples” comes from “tuπος” (Strong’s #5179b) the Greek word from which we get the English word type – an anticipatory pattern or symbol.

-Joseph H. Thayer, “Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.,” repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015, p. 632.

Though this word is variously used in the New Testament, it is also used in our present context in Romans 5:14, where Paul declares that Adam “is a figure (tuπος, or type) of him that was to come”, i.e., Christ.

There are also several other Greek words used in the New Testament to convey this concept, such as “skia” (Strong’s #4639), rendered “shadow” in Colossians 2:17. This word, according to Thayer’s Lexicon, can mean “an image cast by an object and representing the form of that object.”

-Ibid., p. 578.

In other words, the shadow would be like the type and the object casting the shadow is the antitype. This is exactly how it is used in Colossians 2:17...

“Which are a shadow (skia) of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” -Colossians 2:17

There is also the term “hupodeigma” (Strong’s #G5262) translated “example,” and used in conjunction with “shadow” in Hebrews 8:5 (cf. Hebrews 9:23). This word also means a figure, an example, or a model.

-Ibid., pp. 642-643.

In Hebrews 8:5, we see three of these terms in the same verse, all conveying a similar concept:

“Who serve unto the example (hupodeigma) and shadow (skia) of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern (tuπος) shewed to thee in the mount.” -Hebrews 8:5

Another Greek word, “parabole” (Strong’s #G3850 – compare to our English “parable”), is found in Hebrews 9:9, where certain elements of the tabernacle are described as “a figure for the present time” (cf. Hebrews 11:19). This word means a comparison, likeness, similitude, or a parable.

-ibid., p. 479.

“Which was a figure (parabole) for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;”

-Hebrews 9:9

Finally, we should note the use of the word “antitupos” (Strong’s #G499 – compare to our English word “antitype”), rendered “figures” in Hebrews 9:24, and “like figure” in 1 Peter 3:21. This word, as used in the New Testament, denotes that which corresponds to the type. The antitype is the reality which fulfills the prophetic type – in other words, the ultimate fulfillment it anticipates and points toward.

-ibid., p. 51.

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures (antitupos) of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:”

-Hebrews 9:24

“The like figure (antitupos) whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:” -1 Peter 3:21

So, we can see that this is a well-established concept, and it is clear that the Bible interprets itself this way, and is in no way a creation of

man's imagination.

An understanding of prophetic types is essential to an understanding of the Bible. Many of the prominent characters in the Old Testament function in certain ways as types that anticipate the then-future Jesus Christ, who is the antitype. Jesus can be found on basically every page of the Old Testament, if you know how to look for Him. He is there symbolically through the strategic use of types. The Word of God contains countless types and foreshadows which deliberately point to Christ. Jesus explained that all the Scriptures testify of Him.

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” –Hebrews 10:7

This claim is not an exaggeration. When we study all the wonderful types and foreshadows found in God's Word, we discover that truly, the volume of the book is written of Jesus Christ. Looking for Jesus and finding Him in these types causes the Old Testament to come alive for the New Testament-believing Christian.

This theme of Old Testament prophecy and typology concerning Christ is also elucidated in Luke 24, where Jesus on the day of His resurrection, appeared to certain believers on the road to Emmaus...

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”  
–Luke 24:27

In other words, Jesus is claiming that laced all throughout the Old Testament, were deliberately placed typologically anticipations of Him as the Christ, and the work of redemption He performed on the cross. You cannot understand Leviticus without Hebrews, or Daniel without Revelation, or the Passover and Isaiah 53 without the Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion.

Clearly, the majority of the Jews (including all of current Judaism) completely missed the point of not only much of what their ancestors experienced, but also what their established laws and holidays pointed toward. We can now take enjoyment in looking back at them and recognizing how they all pointed ahead towards Christ and the New Testament fulfillments. We will investigate many of these elements as we progress through this study.

But the prophetic types that exist in the Bible anticipate more than only Jesus. All of the major themes in the Bible are hidden throughout the Scriptures in the form of prophetic types, shadows, and patterns.

The value of the study of the types and antitypes is the proof they furnish of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. Their study proves beyond question that the Scriptures had but one Author – the Holy Spirit. Let's examine several kinds of types!

We can break this down into several categories:

- Individuals or Groups:

Almost every major character in the Old Testament is a type of Christ in the sense that certain key events in their lives were prophetic portraits of key things that would happen to Jesus. Take Joseph for example. He was rejected by his brethren. He was left for dead, but was “resurrected” from the pit into which he had been cast. He took a Gentile bride and then redeemed his brethren from their famine.

Likewise, Jesus was rejected by His brethren (the Jews), experienced death and resurrection, is now taking a Gentile bride (the church), and will soon return to save a remnant of His brethren from their spiritual famine (the Jews from their unbelief at the Second Coming).

There are also those in the Old Testament who are types of the church, the future “Gentile bride” of Christ. Many of the significant brides in the Old Testament fit this model in some very unique ways.

- Events and Institutions:

Typological prophecies are also exemplified by major events, institutions, ceremonies, and commandments established by God. Look at the seven Levitical Feasts, for example, which God instructed the Israelites to observe on very specific days of the year. Jesus was crucified as our “Passover Lamb” on the Feast of Passover. He became our “Unleavened Bread” as His body rested in the ground on the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He arose as our “Firstfruits” from the dead on the

Feast of First Fruits. And the church was established on the Feast of Pentecost, the same day that the Law was given on Mt. Sinai over a thousand years earlier. These four major events were all precisely fulfilled on the actual Feast days that acted as types of them. The three remaining unfulfilled Fall Feasts (Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles) must, in like manner, point to events that are yet to occur (most likely, the Rapture, the Second Coming, and the Millennial Reign of Christ). For further details on this, please consult the companion study entitled, “[Typology Of The Moedim: The Levitical Feasts As Prophetic Macrocodes](#)”. The astonishing prophetic subtleties that God established in these feasts demonstrate how each was deliberately and skillfully designed by Him in order to profile specific future events in His master plan.

Another example is the nation of Israel itself. The history of the Hebrew nation is the story of Jesus in prophetic type. The Children of Israel were born in Canaan, descended into Egypt, came through the Red Sea (you might call, the “Baptism of Moses”), they endured testing in the wilderness, and then entered the Promised Land.

Likewise, Jesus was born in Canaan, descended into Egypt, emerged publicly at His baptism, endured the wilderness temptations, and led the way to our Promised Land called Heaven.

Another important example, the institution of the ancient

Jewish wedding ceremony, is an incredible type/shadow/pattern of the marriage between Christ (the Bridegroom) and the church (His pure, virgin bride). For further details on this, please consult the companion study entitled, “The Romance Of Redemption: The Marriage Of Jesus Christ And The Church”.

- Objects/Animals, et al.:

-Objects:

Even inanimate objects like those in the Tabernacle are prophetic types pointing to Jesus.

Consider the Ark of the Covenant. Everything about it was prophetically symbolic of the Messiah. It was made of wood, indicating the Messiah would be human. It was overlaid with gold, signifying the Messiah would also be divine. It contained three objects – the tablets of stone, a pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded. The tablets signified that the Messiah would have the law of God in His heart. The manna meant the Messiah would be the Bread of Life. The rod with buds represented that the Messiah would arise from the dead.

The lid of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat. It had a golden angel at each end. The angels faced each other and their wings hovered over the lid. Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest sprinkled blood on the Mercy Seat and communed with the Shekinah glory of God that

hovered above it. The Mercy Seat prophetically pointed to the fact that through the work of the Messiah, the mercy of God would cover the Law. The blood of the Atonement sacrifice foreshadowed the ultimate atoning sacrifice of the Messiah, and the fact that He would have to shed His own blood to atone for our sins.

Jesus fulfilled every prophetic type of the Ark. He was God in the flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). He had the Law in His heart (Matthew 5:17). He shed His blood on the Cross and was resurrected in power, atoning for our sins and covering the Law with Grace (Romans 3:21-26).

Furthermore, consider this:

Mary saw the fulfillment of the Ark when she went to the tomb and discovered the body of Jesus missing. In John 20:11-12, it says she looked into the tomb and beheld two angels in white, sitting – one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. You must recognize the symbolism in action being demonstrated here! In effect, she saw a scene where the bloodied body of Jesus must have stained red the surface of where He had been laid in the tomb, with an angel at each end of it – reminiscent of the Mercy Seat that covered the Ark, whose surface was stained by the blood of the Atonement sacrifice that the High Priest sprinkled on it once a year, in between the two golden angels!

-Animals:

As far as animals, the Passover Lamb was a clear prophecy of the atoning death of the ultimate spotless and sinless Lamb, Jesus Christ. Jesus is also spoken of as being the “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” demonstrating that He exemplifies qualities of both the lamb and the lion. This theme of the Messiah being described as both lamb and lion fits into the overall panorama of the plan of God in a very interesting way. At His First Coming, Christ exemplified the Lamb, but at His Second Coming He will exemplify the Lion. This is the answer to the problem the Jews have always had with trying to understand the apparently contradictory prophetic descriptions of the Messiah!

Even the ancient Hebrew language itself acts as a shadow containing meaning concerning significant future events in God’s plan. This is possible due to a peculiarity concerning the Hebrew language, in which each word or letter has meaning – very different from English (for example, the letter “A” has no intrinsic meaning).

So, how does this work in Hebrew? The word Torah itself, drawing on the concepts that lie behind the original (paleo) Hebrew letters (spelled with a Tav, a Vav, a Resh, and a Heh), embodies some provocative elements: The Tav (originally written as a cross), the Vav (a nail), the Resh (the head of a man), and the Heh (the breath or Spirit of God).

-Chuck Missler, “Cosmic Codes: Hidden Messages from the Edge of Eternity,” Coeur d’Alene, ID: Koinonia House, 1999, p. 129.

Thus, just through the meaning and imagery conveyed by the very letters of the Hebrew word Torah, we get the message that a Man, with the Spirit of God, would be nailed on a cross! This term was in existence well before the Messiah walked the earth. So, the Christian gospel you might say, is “hidden” in the word Torah itself. It is an interesting summary of the climax of God’s love story, which was nailed to a cross erected in Judea some 2,000 years ago.

The entire Biblical drama records the extremes our Creator has resorted to in order to redeem mankind from our predicament. Studying these things will prove to you very clearly that Jesus’ death on the cross was not a last-minute response to a plan that didn’t go well. Rather, you can see how it was always in His plan to go to the cross for you and I, even from the very beginning. You will find that nothing in God’s Word is accidental or coincidental!

As you can see, prophetic types bring the Old Testament alive and give us deep insights into New Testament events and those still yet to come.

In studying the types, we find that some are obvious and some are more hidden or embedded in the text, awaiting discovery. The Bible actually calls to our attention some of the more obvious types. When it does, we often find two comparative words – “as” and “so” which are used to explain to us these types. The word “as” is often used for the type, and the word “so” is often used for the antitype. The

first item is historic, while the second is prophetic.

Let's examine a few:

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

-1 Corinthians 15:22

“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” -Matthew 24:37

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:”

-John 3:14

“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” -Matthew 12:40

The above types with their antitypes stand out so prominently in Scripture that their meaning is clear to the most superficial reader. But there are also many types (some of which we have already mentioned earlier), whose antitype is not as obvious, and is not noticed by the casual reader. We will explore some of these examples found throughout the Bible in the sections to follow.

## Modes Of Prophetic Expression

Let's now break down some of the modes of prophetic expression God used by category, and understand some of the unique ways prophecy was sent forth in the Bible.

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,” –Hebrews 1:1 (ESV)

### 1. Writing Prophets:

Of course, the method that immediately comes to mind is the written form. The prophets who wrote their messages are the ones we know best – people like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the so-called “Minor Prophets” like Habakkuk and Zephaniah. In the New Testament, the writing prophets include Paul, Peter, and John.

But to lump all these writing prophets together into one broad category is misleading, for there is a great variety of personalities and styles among them. As to personalities, the variety is astounding. The prophets range from uneducated farmers like Amos to sophisticated poets like Isaiah, from cowards like Jonah to men of great courage like Daniel, from the little-known like Joel to the famous like King David.

There is an equal variety in the styles of writing used. Some, like Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, and the New Testament prophets, primarily used a prose style (natural non-poetic speech). Others, like David, Isaiah, Joel, and Micah, expressed their ideas in poetic form. And

then there are the preachers whose books are mainly collections of sermons – prophets like Jeremiah, Amos, and Zechariah.

Most were given direct revelations – “Thus says the Lord.” Others received their insight through dreams and visions. Some, like Hosea and Jonah, mainly recorded their experiences.

## 2. Speaking Prophets:

Some of the most important prophets wrote nothing at all, at least nothing that has been preserved. We know about them because others wrote about their revelations, pronouncements, and exploits. Elijah and his successor, Elisha, fall into this category, as does Samuel.

So does the greatest prophet who ever lived – the Prophet foretold by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-18). We are speaking, of course, about Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:11). The bulk of Jesus’ prophecies, like His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21), were written by His disciples. Jesus, in this sense, was an oral prophet while on Earth.

Many of the speaking/oral prophets are not well known. Only a few are mentioned in the New Testament, like the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9) and Agabus, the prophet who counseled Paul (Acts 21:10).

The Old Testament however, is full of oral prophets. Aside from the ones mentioned above (Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha) there is Nathan,

who confronted David (2 Samuel 12); Micaiah, who saw the Lord sitting on His throne (1 Kings 22); Ahijah, who condemned Jeroboam (1 Kings 14); as well as many nameless prophets like the “man of God from Judah” who prophesied the birth of Josiah (1 Kings 13).

### 3. Acting Prophets:

Acting prophets are the prophets who were called upon by God to act out prophecies. These were writing prophets, who at times acted out their prophecies as directed by God. God would tell them from time to time to stop writing or speaking and start acting. God often used drama to get people's attention.

For example, God told Isaiah to go barefoot and naked for three years (Isaiah 20:2). He used an unconventional method to get people's attention. The message was graphic and clear: repent or be stripped naked like Isaiah.

Jeremiah was told to wear a yoke on his neck to emphasize God's message that King Zedekiah should submit to Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 27).

Ezekiel was called on to act many times. On one occasion, the Lord told him to pack all his bags and carry them around Jerusalem in the sight of the people as a sign that if they did not repent, God would send them into exile (Ezekiel 12).

Another time, God told Ezekiel to lie down on the ground on his left side for 390 days, one day for each year of the iniquity of Israel.

When he finished that ordeal, God told him to turn over and lie on his right side for 40 days, for the 40 years of Judah's iniquity (Ezekiel 4:4-8).

The Lord even ordered Ezekiel to play in a sand pile! God told him to label a brick, "Jerusalem," and to build dirt ramps around the brick to illustrate the coming siege of the city (Ezekiel 4:1-3).

Ezekiel's hardest acting assignment came when the Lord revealed that his wife would soon die. The Lord ordered him not to mourn or weep for her. He was to continue with his activities as if nothing had happened. When the people came to him and asked why he was not mourning, the Lord told him to say that if they did not repent, they would be overcome by a conqueror so rapidly that they would not have time to mourn or weep.

Certainly, one of the most memorable of the acting prophets was Hosea. God told him to find a prostitute and marry her. Hosea obeyed, and God told him to preach the message of his action. The message was that Israel was like that prostitute when God selected them as His Chosen People. They were not selected for their wisdom or righteousness. They had no merit. They were selected by grace, in spite of their moral imperfections.

When Hosea returned home from his preaching tour, he discovered that his wife had succumbed to her old passions. She had left the dignity and honor of his home and had returned to the activities of a prostitute. Hosea's heart was broken but God told him to preach the message of her action. The message was, that like Hosea's wife,

Israel had been unfaithful to God, chasing after foreign gods. And like Hosea, God's heart was broken.

When Hosea returned home, God spoke to him again and asked him to do something incredible. God told him to swallow all his pride and go to the city square and bid for his wife when she offered herself for sale. He was instructed to pay all he had, if necessary, to redeem her from harlotry. She didn't deserve it. She had not repented. But Hosea obeyed. He paid the price, and she was redeemed. Thus, God used an acting prophet to act out a "type" of the future fulfillment of what He would do for us at the cross, when He paid the price of His Son to redeem us from our unfaithfulness.

## Hidden Intervals/Gaps And Multiple References/Multiple Stage Fulfillments In Prophecy

Another important thought to keep in mind when interpreting prophecy is that the Eternal's time is not our time:

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

-2 Peter 3:8

### 1. Hidden Intervals/Gaps:

A prophecy of the Scripture may, in the course of a single line, or even in the space of a comma, jump from one fulfillment event to another, being hundreds or even thousands of years apart. We will refer to this as a “hidden interval” or a “hidden gap” prophecy. Nowhere is this truer than in the prophecies of the Messiah's Two Comings.

- Scattered throughout the Scriptures are prophecies that contain references to both the First and Second Coming of the Lord in what appears to be a single thought. These hidden interval prophecies could only be identified as such after the First Coming had already taken place. That's because they were written in such a way that it was impossible to tell beforehand that the Lord's First Coming would only partially fulfill them. Often, the writers switch from the First Coming to the Second Coming in the middle of a sentence without so

much as a punctuation mark to alert the reader (and they themselves likely had no idea either).

A classic example that Jesus Christ Himself interpreted for us can be found in Luke 4:16-19. This passage records that Jesus stood up in the synagogue when it was His turn to read, and opened to the book of the prophet Isaiah. He proceeded to read Isaiah 61:1-2, proclaiming His mission at His First Coming. He finishes with His mandate, "To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

-Luke 4:16-21

What you probably wouldn't realize without going back to Isaiah to read the original prophecy, is that Jesus stopped reading right in the middle of the sentence! The rest reads, "and the day of vengeance of our God..."

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;"

–Isaiah 61:1-2

Jesus stopped reading at the comma that preceded "and the day of vengeance of our God..." Why? Because we now understand that after that comma, the prophecy jumped from the time of Messiah's First Coming to some several thousand years or more into the future – past the present time we are living in now – to the time of His Second Coming. The "day of vengeance" was not part of His mission during His First Coming, but it will be fulfilled at His Second Coming.

This is a good example of Christ's dual missions, which we mentioned earlier – in His First Coming He came as a Lamb, Servant, Savior, Redeemer, Husband, and as an earth-born man who was really God. But in His Second Coming, He will come as Lion, King, Judge, and Punisher, coming down from

heaven as the one true God who also had become a man. So, we can see that in one single sentence, the prophetic content can span thousands of years. Simply put, the comma punctuating the sentence in this passage has lasted around 2,000 years!

- Let's examine a few more examples of prophetic Messianic passages that involve hidden intervals or gaps. A few other well-known examples are found in Isaiah 9:6 and Micah 5:2. Let's take a quick look at each...

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”  
-Isaiah 9:6

When the Lord had Isaiah write this prophecy 750 years before the fact, no one could have known from reading it that when the Messiah came the first time, He would only fulfill a portion of it. The child was born and the Son was given, but the government has never been upon His shoulders, and by Israel, to whom He was sent, He has never been called the names Isaiah attributed to Him. These are all Second Coming events, which will become obvious if we continue to read through Scripture. So, the one sentence in this verse includes a hidden gap of about 2,000 years, to date.

Let's examine the other...

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” –Micah 5:2

This prophecy calls for a Messianic Ruler of Israel to be born in Bethlehem, but gives no indication that thousands of years would pass between this Ruler’s birth and His ascension to the literal throne of Israel (a Second Coming event that is fulfilled when Jesus will literally rule from the throne of David during the Millennial Kingdom).

When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem, they asked King Herod, “Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews?” (Mt. 2:2). Herod asked the Jewish leaders where the Messiah had been prophesied to be born, and they used this prophecy in Micah to confirm that He would be born in Bethlehem (Mt. 2:4-6). The Magi hastened there, apparently believing they were going to visit a boy king who would grow up to rule over Israel.

Thinking along the same lines, Herod had all the young boys in Bethlehem killed in an unsuccessful effort to eliminate what He perceived to be an imminent threat to his rulership. But while the Coming King was born, His intention was not to take His place on the throne in Israel at His First Coming, but rather at His Second Coming. So again, in this prophecy in Micah, we

see dual references – one to His First Coming and one still to be fulfilled at His Second Coming – all in the same verse.

- Another obvious example of a hidden interval in prophecy is found in Daniel 9:24-27, the famed 70-weeks prophecy. When reading this prophecy, we find 70 prophetic “weeks” of years predicted. If you read the prophecy back then, you would be tempted to conclude that the 70 weeks were contiguous (meaning uninterrupted, or without any gaps). In this prophecy, Gabriel gives Daniel a prophecy that 70 “weeks of years” (490 years) would take place concerning the Jews and Jerusalem before the end of the age.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city (the Jews + Jerusalem), to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks (total = 69 weeks, or 483 years): the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

And after threescore and two (After the 69 weeks, or 483 years) weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

And he (the “prince that shall come,” better known as the Antichrist) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week (the final 70<sup>th</sup> week, which is still future): and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

-Daniel 9:24-27

Notice that:

1. The focus of the passage is on the Jews, not the church, nor the Gentile world. Also,
2. There are six major items, which as a whole, have yet to be completed:
  - to finish the transgressions;
  - to make an end of sins;
  - to make reconciliation for iniquity;
  - to bring in everlasting righteousness;
  - to seal up (close the authority of) the vision;
  - to anoint the the Holy of Holies.

According to this prophecy, after the 69 weeks, the Messiah would be killed. That took place with the crucifixion of Jesus almost 2,000 years ago – probably the most well-documented event in ancient history. Yet, the fact that all of these six items have not yet been fulfilled since then demonstrates that the

70 weeks are not contiguous. In other words, there is a hidden gap implied.

We find out that this gap - positioned in between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> weeks - is the time period in which God's stopwatch has paused concerning Israel and has begun concerning the church. Remember - according to the prophecy, the 70 Weeks' focus is on national Israel and Jerusalem - not the church or any other group! This gap includes what we may refer to as the "church age" - in which we currently live.

So, we find that this hidden interval in which God would separate for Himself a bride, which we call the church, was a hidden mystery all through the Old Testament, although subtly represented through types, shadows and patterns. In the New Testament, we find that the apostle Paul considered it his unique privilege to reveal the "mystery" of this distinct entity called the church!

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." -Ephesians 5:31-32

The word "mystery" here in the Greek "mysterion" (Strong's #G3466), and it conveys a slightly different meaning than the same word in English. In Greek, a mystery expresses something that was formerly hidden or unknown, but is now revealed.

-Thayer, p. 420.

So, the mystery of the church and the church age was hidden in many of these gap prophecies we encounter throughout Scripture. For more details on the incredible Seventy Weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 – specifically, the 69-Week “Countdown to the Messiah,” please consult the companion study entitled, “The Daniel 9:25 Prophecy: An Exact Timeline For The Arrival Of The Messiah”.

## 2. Multiple References/Multiple Stage Fulfillments:

In some ways, there may be some overlap between our first category of “hidden interval” prophecies which we just discussed, and these “multiple reference/multiple stage fulfillment” prophecies that we will now discuss. You may also hear many of these simply referred to as “dual reference” or “near/far-term fulfillment” prophecies.

What do we mean by overlap? For example, some of the multiple reference/multiple stage fulfillment prophecies we will now examine obviously imply a time gap – meaning they could also fit into the previous category. If something refers to two different people or events, then unless they happen simultaneously, there is a time gap implied. With that being said, although some overlap may at times exist, we believe that by categorizing these aspects separately, it may help provide us with a sharper focus on some of the specifics involved in these incredible prophecies.

The “hidden interval” prophecies in the previous section are typically used to designate hidden time ages that may involve very central dispensational themes such as the Two Comings of Jesus as well as the hidden church age. So be mindful of the similarities as we continue, but let’s also begin to discern some of the differences in the examples we will highlight in this category.

In Scripture, there are prophecies where it is clear who or what the original subject is, but then in the text, the prophecy clearly begins to transcend that person and point to a future person or subject that will be the ultimate fulfillment. In other words, at some point in the text, it becomes very clear that the prophecy is a “double prophecy” that goes to a depth far beyond what the first subject could ever fulfill. In other words, it has both a near or short-term fulfillment as well as a far or long-term fulfillment. We may refer to these as “multiple reference” or “multiple stage fulfillment” prophecies.

The following is one of the better-known examples of a multiple reference prophecy, because it refers to an individual alive at that time, but also points to a future ultimate figure. However, it could also be described as a multiple stage fulfillment prophecy because it has two stages of fulfillment (one near and one far-future).

- In the Book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 28:12-19), there is a description of someone called the King of Tyre. Though there was an actual historical person who was the King of Tyre, the description the Bible gives of this person at some point seems to go far beyond just describing this human leader. Though in

context, Ezekiel was first speaking about the historical King of Tyre, at some point in the prophecy, he seemingly moved into the dateless past with a description of the original fall of Satan – the true power behind the earthly King of Tyre.

Let's take a closer look...

At first, God was directly addressing the King of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:1-11). Because the King of Tyre boasted that he was a god, the true God declared that he would die and be thrown down into the pit (v. 8). However, starting in Verse 12, the lamentation begins to clearly transcend the King of Tyre and clearly extends to address Satan – the ultimate villain who far earlier, had attempted the same idiocy – only on a more cosmic level. Let's read Verses 12-14, where we can see that the content obviously transcends the human King of Tyre:

“Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.”

-Ezekiel 28:12-14

Clearly, the King of Tyre was never an anointed cherub in Eden, etc. Instead, we see in this passage a prime example of a double meaning prophecy with both a near and a distant reference, or ultimate fulfillment. In this case, the King of Tyre becomes a “type” of Satan, and the chapter provides us with a flashback to his fall and a proclamation of his eventual demise.

In other words, the King of Tyre is a partial “reverse type” of Satan because he was a current version of what Satan did far in the past – attempt to ascend to god-hood. So, the first part of the passage, which clearly applies to the King of Tyre also applies to Satan. But yet the King of Tyre is still a type of a future event concerning Satan in the sense that his demise typifies the future demise of Satan.

- Further examples of these types of prophecies are found in the writings of David in the Psalms. The Psalms are sprinkled with prophecies that apply directly to David and his day, while also applying to – and being fulfilled in – Jesus Christ. Psalm 22 is the classic example, with David’s sufferings being a vivid foreshadowing of the Messiah’s future sufferings and death. At certain points in the chapter, it is clear that the prophecy transcends David’s natural experiences and targets the future trials of the Messiah. For more information on this, please consult the companion study entitled, “[The Psalm 22 Prophecy: The Messiah On The Cross](#)”.

- Another example of a multiple reference prophecy is found in Hosea, a book home to much prophetic content. In the verse below, the prophet Hosea recounts Israel's exodus out of Egypt. That was a big event, but it also turns out to be part of a bigger prophetic picture:

“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” –Hosea 11:1

As we mentioned earlier, the story of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament prefigures certain aspects of the earthly life of Jesus. In Matthew, we are told that Hosea's words also apply to Jesus Christ when He was a young boy.

“When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.”

–Matthew 2:14-15

Jesus and His parents fled out of Israel to Egypt when King Herod tried to kill all the young boys in Bethlehem. A few years later, Jesus returned to the land of Israel from Egypt.

So, this statement from Hosea had a past historical relevance – concerning God bringing national Israel out of Egyptian bondage – but also had an ultimate future prophetic reference to the Messiah – a double meaning or reference.

- Maybe one of the most well recognized multiple reference/multiple stage fulfillment prophecies involves the “Abomination of Desolation” prophecy found in Daniel 12:11. The Prophet Daniel predicted the coming of an evil ruler who would put a stop to the Temple sacrifices in Jerusalem.

In 167 B.C. the Grecian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes partially fulfilled this prophecy by attacking Jerusalem and stopping the Jewish sacrifices in dramatic fashion. Antiochus slaughtered a pig on the altar in the Temple and set up an idol in the Holy of Holies, thus desecrating it in a way not done before and never done since. Daniel 12:11 calls this then-future event the “abomination that maketh desolate.”

The Jewish holiday called Hanukkah is the celebration of the rededication of the Temple following this desecration by Antiochus.

-<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/hanukkah> (Retrieved 11/12/18)

The celebration of this holiday is even mentioned in John 10:22. These events are well documented in historical records such as 1 and 2 Maccabees and Josephus. However, in Matthew Chapter 24 – long after Antiochus – Jesus tells us that the “abomination of desolation” profiled a far future ultimate event:

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:”  
–Matthew 24:15-16

Some have wrongly concluded that this was somehow fulfilled in 70 A.D. at the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. However, although they try to stretch history to make it fit, there are a number of Biblical problems with this. One of the biggest problems is that companion passages in Daniel, the Gospels, 2 Thessalonians, and Revelation clearly depict this abomination of desolation event as occurring in the future Seventieth Week (or Tribulation) directly prior to the Second Coming of Christ. So, at most, the events of 70 A.D. could potentially serve as another prophetic anticipation of the ultimate fulfillment by the future Antichrist.

But we know from Scripture that sometime in the future, a new Temple will be built in Jerusalem and animal sacrifices will resume. Toward the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21), the Antichrist will commit an act of desolation similar to that of Antiochus, putting an end to the Temple sacrifices and desecrating the Holy of Holies (Dan. 12:11; 2 Thess. 2:4; Mt. 24:15).

So, we can view both a near and a far-future realization of this “abomination of desolation” prophecy in Daniel. It is examples such as this that often throw off novice prophecy

investigators. For example, if they have discovered a compelling historical or Biblical fulfillment of a particular Scriptural prophecy, they often simply view it as a past-fulfilled prophecy, neglecting the possibility that it could have both a near and a far-future double fulfillment.

In other words, the first fulfillment could have acted as a “type” for the ultimate “antitype” fulfillment. The Bible clearly suggests that to be the case, as we see in this example. In this “abomination of desolation” instance, the Bible gives ample clues to the studious Bible reader to allow us to recognize that this prophesied event will take place also at the end of the age in Daniel’s final “70<sup>th</sup> week,” (the final 7-year period of time before the Second Coming of Christ).

To conclude, we can see that Scripture contains numerous examples of prophecies with hidden gaps or intervals, multiple references, and multiple stage fulfillments. In fact, most (if not all) of the Messianic prophecies had both a near-term realization (applicable to the human author and his day), as well as a long-term fulfillment found in Jesus Christ – and many concern both First and Second Coming events. This again brings to mind Jesus’ statement in Hebrews 10:7 about the whole volume of Scripture being written about Him.

## Conclusion

As we conclude our study, let's briefly review what we've discovered.

### -Forms of Prophecy

1. Predictive Prophecy (Plain, Symbolic, Poetic)
2. Typological Prophecy (Types/Shadows/Patterns)
  - Individuals or Groups
  - Events and Institutions
  - Objects/Animals, et al.

### -Modes of Prophetic Expression

1. Writing Prophets
2. Speaking Prophets
3. Acting Prophets

### -Hidden Intervals/Gaps and Multiple References/Multiple Stage Fulfillments in Prophecy

1. Hidden Intervals/Gaps
2. Multiple References/Multiple Stage Fulfillments

So, let's recognize the ultimate point of our study on Biblical prophecy. One of the greatest evidences of the validity of the Bible as being God's Word comes from its routine use of prophecy. The Bible habitually anticipates history in advance. We have examined some of the various ways that God transmits prophetic content to us through His Word. This quality

of consistently, accurately, and precisely anticipating future events is unique only to God – who exists outside of the dimension of time altogether – and is one of the primary ways He authenticates His message to us.

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