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Is The Second Coming of Jesus Christ Possible ?

Most Christians believe that there will be a second coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

No one knows for sure if this will really happen, its strictly a matter of belief. For those that do believe in a second coming, there has been differing speculation on when this might occur.

Based on historic biblical writings, there are **seven prophecies** that must be fulfilled before Jesus Christ's return.

Previous generations have thought that Jesus Christ would return in their lifetimes, but they were proven wrong. Many people alive today think that Christ's return is imminent. Certainly, the Bible contains prophecies that could not have been fulfilled until this generation.

Shortly before His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus Christ delivered a major prophecy of end-time events, recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. He was asked by His disciples: "When will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew: 24, 3).

Jesus responded with a description of conditions and events that would lead up to His second coming. Moreover, He said that when these signs became evident, His return would occur within one generation (Matthew: 24, 34). Could this be that generation?

Throughout the nearly 2,000 years since Christ gave His prophecy, many have thought that theirs was the time of His return—and turned out to be wrong, of course.

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But interestingly, there are a number of prophecies in the Bible that could not be fulfilled until our modern era, the post-World War II period:

1. The human race would have the ability to exterminate itself.

In (Matthew: 24, 22), describing world conditions prior to His second coming, Jesus said that "if that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could survive; but for the sake of God's chosen it will be cut short" (Revised English Bible).

The main message that Jesus Christ brought was of the coming Kingdom of God. This is described as "the gospel" (Mark: 1, 14). Gospel means "good news." While some of the prophecies concerning events prior to the establishment of the Kingdom can seem negative, we should always keep in mind that the central focus of Bible prophecy is the good news (gospel) of the coming Kingdom of God.

Matthew: 24, 22 shows us that if Jesus Christ does not intervene in world affairs, the human race will be faced with extinction. It's crucial to note that humanity has had the capability for self-annihilation for only a little more than 50 years, since both the United States and the Soviet Union developed and stockpiled hydrogen bombs and the world had to learn to live with "mutually assured destruction."

At that time there were only three nuclear powers (Britain being the other). By the middle of the 1960s France and China had joined the nuclear club.

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Today at least eight nations have nuclear warheads and the number looks set to increase with a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

Of course, the more nuclear powers we have in the world, the more likely it is that someone will use this deadly force for evil.

Although international attention has been focused on the nuclear programs of North Korea and Iran during the last few years, little attention has been given to the possibility of some or Pakistan's entire nuclear arsenal falling into the hands of radical Islamists.

During the ongoing crisis in Pakistan, the Taliban and al-Qaeda and their sympathizers have steadily gained more power, territory and influence, making nuclear terrorism more likely. Consider the consequences for the rest of the world if Osama bin Laden (or others like him) had access to nuclear weapons!

Meanwhile, Russia and China are determinedly flexing their military muscles, raising fears of a return to Cold War-era tensions.

The good news in all this is that Christians have an assurance that Jesus Christ will intervene to save mankind from annihilation. This prophecy could not be fulfilled until man had the potential for self-extinction through weapons of mass destruction. Again, only in the last 50 years has this become possible.

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2. A Jewish homeland had to be reestablished in the Middle East.

Geopolitically, the central focus of end-time events is Jerusalem and its environs, what many people refer to as the Holy Land.

Luke 21 is a parallel chapter to Matthew 24. Notice Luke's account of Christ's long prophecy that answered the disciples' questions: "Teacher . . . when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?" (Luke: 21, 7).

In response, Jesus showed that Jerusalem would be the central focus of the political and military upheavals that would immediately precede His return:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near . . . For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (verses 20-22).

Anyone living a century ago would have found these words nearly impossible to comprehend. Jerusalem in ancient times had been fought over countless times, but for four centuries from 1517 the city had been at peace within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire.

Jews lived there as a minority under Turkish rule. But this was going to change dramatically during the course of the 20th century.

It had to change for the fulfillment of Bible prophecy to take place.

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah was used by God to reveal a great deal about end-time events and the second coming of the Messiah.

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Zechariah lived and prophesied more than 500 years before Christ's first coming, yet his prophetic book tells us a great deal about our world of today.

In (Zechariah: 12, 2-3) God says: "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah [the Jews inhabiting the land of Israel] and Jerusalem.

And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the Earth are gathered against it."

In verse 9 He adds, "It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

Reading these verses, it is possible to think that they apply to ancient events, as Jerusalem has been fought over repeatedly down through the ages.

However, chapter 14 makes clear that this is talking about future, not past, events. The time setting is immediately before Jesus Christ's return.

"Behold, the day of the Lord is coming . . . For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished.

Half of the city shall go into captivity . . . Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.

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"And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east.

And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south" (Zechariah: 14, 1-4).

Clearly the last few lines of this prophecy remain to be fulfilled.

Further in this same chapter we read of how those nations that came against Jerusalem will have to go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Jesus Christ (verse 16).

These chapters of Zechariah are a prophecy about the events that precede and include the second coming of Jesus. A Jewish-controlled Jerusalem is notice-ably the central focus.

Shortly before Zechariah, another Jewish prophet named Daniel lived during the time of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon.

His book speaks of the Jews' daily sacrifices being cut off in the end time (Daniel: 12, 11; see verses 1-13)—an event that had a forerunner in the temple defilement under Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C.

However, Jesus Christ confirmed this as a future event to precede His return (compare Daniel: 11, 31; Matthew: 24, 15).

This means that these sacrifices must first be reinstated in Jerusalem—requiring Jewish rule over the city.

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One hundred years ago such developments were hard to imagine for the simple reason that no independent Jewish political entity existed in the Middle East.

After rebelling against the Romans in A.D. 66 and again in 132, Judea was crushed and most of the remaining Jews were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. No Jewish homeland existed again until 1948 when the modern nation of Israel was established.

An independent Jewish homeland was merely a dream for a small group of zealots a century ago. It moved a step nearer during World War I, when forces of the British Commonwealth took control of Jerusalem from the Turks in December 1916.

A few months later, the British government pledged itself to the establishment of an independent Jewish homeland in the ancient lands the Jews had inhabited for centuries.

It was to be another 30 years before the dream was realized in 1948. Yet since then tiny Israel has had to fight wars for survival in 1948, 1967 and 1973 and has suffered countless terrorist attacks and threats of annihilation from hostile neighbors determined to eliminate the Jewish state.

Once again, here is a prophecy that can now be fulfilled in our time.

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3. The end-time king of the North and king of the South.

In Daniel 11 we find an amazing prophecy about two leaders, the kings of the North and South, the heads of regions that were geographically north and south of the Holy Land.

To understand this prophecy we have to go to the time of Alexander the Great, who lived near the end of the fourth century B.C., 200 years after Daniel.

Alexander figures prominently throughout the book of Daniel, even though Daniel did not know his name and never knew him personally. He couldn't have, since he died almost two centuries before Alexander appeared on the world stage.

But God revealed to Daniel that after Babylon, Persia would arise as the greatest power of the region, to be followed in turn by Greece. Not surprisingly, the prophecies regarding the rise of Greece are centered on Alexander the Great, one of the greatest conquerors in history.

Daniel 8 gives a vivid account of the coming clash between Persia and Greece. As you read it, remember that a horn symbolizes royal power and authority. Persia had "two horns and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last."

This refers to the Medoc-Persian Empire, the coming together of two nations or peoples. As foretold here in verse 3, the Persians rose to greatness after the Medes.

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In verse 5 we read of Persia's later defeat by Alexander the Great: "And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole Earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes" (verse 5).

The "notable horn" or royal leader was Alexander the Great. The prophecy about his army not even touching the ground is a reference to the incredible speed with which he conquered the known world. All this was achieved in a very short time. Alexander died in 323 B.C. when he was only about 33 years old.

Even his sudden, unexpected death was prophesied: "The male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven" (verse 8).

When Alexander died, his empire was eventually divided between four of his generals—the four "notable horns" mentioned here.

Two of these established dynasties would have a profound effect on the Jewish people, caught in the middle between them. These two dynasties were the descendants of Seleucus, who ruled a vast empire from Antioch in Syria, north of Jerusalem, and Ptolemy, who ruled Egypt from Alexandria.

Daniel 11 is a long and detailed prophecy about the dynastic conflicts between these two powers, their respective leaders being referred to as "the king of the North" and "the king of the South." Of great significance is that whenever they went to battle against each other, the Jews got trampled on.

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This was to continue from the time of Alexander until the middle of the second century B.C., a period of almost two centuries.

Then, suddenly, the prophecy jumps down to the end time.

In verse 40 we read: "At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships;

And he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land [the Holy Land], and many countries shall be overthrown" (Daniel: 11, 40-41).

While we don't have space here to cover all the details, the latter part of Daniel's prophecy of the North-South conflict describes a clash of civilizations between the leader of a soon-coming European superpower—a revived Roman Empire (successor to Seleucid Syrian rule)—and a leader who is the successor to the Ptolemaic rule of Egypt, which is now part of the Islamic world.

We now see geopolitical conditions lining up for this inevitable clash. Here is yet another prophesied circumstance for which the stage has now been set within our lifetime!

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4. An end-time union of European nations.

In Daniel 2 and 7 we see prophecies about four great gentile empires that would arise in the period between the time of Daniel and the coming establishment of the Kingdom of God (Daniel:2:44).

Daniel was himself living in the first of these great empires (Daniel: 7:4) as a Jewish exile in ancient Babylon.

Following the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C., Persia would become the greatest power, to be followed by Greece (verses 5-6). After Greece came the Roman Empire, "dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong."

This empire was to have "ten horns" and would continue in some form until the establishment of God's Kingdom at Christ's return (verses 7-9).

As we saw in the previous section, horns represent leaders or governments. Here these 10 horns symbolize 10 attempts to restore the Roman Empire to the power it had in ancient times.

Various attempts at a restoration have taken place since the fall of the Western Roman Empire in A.D. 476. A final attempt is to be made shortly before Christ's return.

We find more details in Revelation 17. Here we read of a final attempt to revive the Roman Empire by "ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast" (verses 12-13).

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They will also "make war with the Lamb (Jesus Christ), and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (verse 14). Again, it is clear that this prophecy is still future.

Previous attempts to forge a united European empire, from Justinian in the sixth century through Charlemagne, Napoleon, Mussolini and Hitler, all involved force. The final resurrection of the Roman Empire will not be attempted in the same way.

Revelation 17 suggests this will be a voluntary union. When these 10 leaders receive power, they will then give their authority to a single leader. Scripture refers to both this individual and the new superpower he leads as "the beast"—acknowledging it as the continuation of the four gentile empires prophesied in Daniel, each one depicted as a beast or wild animal.

Only now is it possible for this to be fulfilled.

In 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed by six European nations that formed the European Economic Community.

Today the EEC has grown into the European Union (EU) with 27 member nations. Out of these will likely emerge the 10 nations or 10 leaders that form the final resurrection of the Roman Empire.

(Some have speculated that the 10 kings referred to in this prophecy will be leaders of 10 regions of the EU that will redraw the boundaries of Europe, ending the present nation-states. The Bible is not clear on exactly which 10 regions or nations will configure the final revival of the militaristic Roman superpower—only that this new superpower will indeed emerge just before Christ's return.

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However, it wasn't until the 10th nation, Greece, was admitted in 1981 that any conceivable fulfillment of this prophecy was even possible.

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5. End-time rise and fall of Israel and Judah.

Israel was the new name God gave the biblical patriarch Jacob in Genesis 32. The 12 tribes of Israel were descended from his 12 sons. These tribes later formed a united kingdom.

It's been almost 3,000 years since the kingdom of Israel was split in two. Ten of the 12 tribes of Israel rebelled against King Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon and grandson of King David. The Bible continued to refer to these 10 tribes as Israel while the other two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) that remained loyal to David's descendants were known as the kingdom of Judah or simply Judah.

Sometimes Israel is referred to as the northern kingdom and Judah as the southern kingdom. Dominant among the northern tribes were to be the descendants of Jacob's son Joseph.

Through his sons Ephraim and Manasseh—prophesied by Jacob to be the chief nations of the world in the last days (Genesis: 49:1, 22-26; compare Deuteronomy: 33, 13-17).

About 200 years after the kingdom split, the northern tribes of Israel fell to Assyria and were deported by the Assyrians to the northern parts of their empire. Often referred to now as the lost tribes, they later migrated northwest across Europe, eventually settling in new homelands far from the Middle East.

The kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon more than a century after Israel's deportation, but its people were not lost to history. We know them today as the Jews.

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The name Ephraim is sometimes used representatively in Scripture for the entire northern kingdom, though it can also refer solely to the descendants of Joseph's son of that name—prophesied to become a "multitude of nations" (Genesis:48, 19). Remarkably, this promise to Ephraim was fulfilled in the British Empire and Commonwealth.

Ephraim's older brother Manasseh was also prophesied to become a great nation (same verse), separating himself from the multitude of nations. This prophecy would be fulfilled in the formation, growth and dominance of the United States of America.

In a revealing prophecy regarding the United States and Britain, Jacob (Israel) said, "Let my name be named upon them" (verse 16). References to "Israel" in end-time prophecy often refer to the United States or the English-speaking countries of the British Empire or both.

Sometimes "Israel" can mean all 12 tribes. We have to look at specific verses in their context to see which is meant.

"Judah," however, always refers to the Jews, the descendants of the house or kingdom of Judah. We must also understand that the modern nation called Israel is really Judah, made up of Jews. (For much more detail, download or request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*).

Understanding this critical part of biblical history will help us more fully comprehend a passage of Scripture in the book of Hosea, which is a prophecy about Ephraim (the multitude of nations—Great Britain and some of those nations that came out of her).

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It warns of destruction to follow the end-time ascendancy of the Israelite nations.

In Hosea 5 we read a prophecy that mentions Israel, Ephraim and Judah: "The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them" (verse 5). The prophecy continues: "With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the Lord, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt treacherously with the Lord, for they have begotten pagan children. Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage" (verses 6-7).

New moons occur a month apart. A new moon "devouring" them would seem to mean that Israel, Ephraim and Judah will all fall within one month.

This prophecy was not fulfilled in ancient times. As already mentioned, ancient Judah fell to Babylon more than a century after Israel fell to Assyria.

Yet in the end it appears they will fall together—within one month of each other. This prophecy remains to be fulfilled.

Remember that Israel gave his name to Ephraim and Manasseh, the ancestors in turn of the British and American peoples.

As Ephraim is mentioned separately in this prophecy, the reference to "Israel" must apply to the United States, which is now the more dominant of the two nations.

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For two centuries prior to World War II, the roles were reversed with the multitude of nations—the British Empire—a greater power than the single nation, the United States. But today America is the greater.

"Judah" refers to the Jewish people, particularly those who now constitute the modern nation in the Middle East that calls itself Israel.

Here then is a prophecy regarding all three nations—the United States, Britain and Israel (Judah). According to this prophecy, it appears that all three will fall within the span of a month.

Verse 6 shows these nations turning back to God, but finding it's too late. Because of their sins, He will let them suffer defeat and collapse.

This prophecy could not have been fulfilled until after the rise of Britain and the United States as world powers in the 19th century and the formation of the Jewish state of Israel in the 20th.

Lest the idea seem outlandish, consider that Israel and the United States are perhaps the most maligned and criticized nations on Earth. Among Muslim hard-liners, America is commonly called "the great Satan" and Israel and Britain "the little Satans."

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6. The gospel will be preached in the entire world.

In His major end-time prophecy, Jesus answers the question posed by the disciples: "When will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew: 24:3).

After listing a number of signs of the nearness of His coming, He reveals that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (verse 14).

The gospel is the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. This message could not be preached around the world without the Bible and freedom of religion. Both came gradually with the ascendancy of the English-speaking peoples from the 16th century until the present day.

However, it was only with the technological advances of television and radio and other means of mass communication after World War II and their widespread acceptance that it became possible to reach hundreds of millions of human beings with the message of the Bible.

The gospel of the Kingdom of God will continue to be preached to all nations as long as we have the freedom to continue The Good News magazine and our other media efforts.

Even so, during the last 50 years it has not been possible to reach all countries. The former communist nations did not allow freedom of religion. China, with one quarter of the world's people, still does not.

Other nations also try to suppress the publication of biblical truth and even the Bible itself.

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Many Islamic nations do not allow religious freedom. In some countries people risk the death penalty for changing religion.

But the Internet is changing everything. It is much harder for governments to control. The gospel message of the coming Kingdom of God is still going out to the world. It will finish when God has decided that His work is completed and the time is right for the final end-time events to take place.

This is yet another prophecy that could not be fulfilled until recent times.

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7. Instant worldwide communications and God's final witnesses.

Another end-time Bible prophecy could not be fulfilled until this era of instant worldwide communications.

In His major end-time prophecy of Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, Jesus gave an outline of disasters that would occur on the world scene with increasing frequency and magnitude—to the point where people would be shaken with fear (Luke:21, 26).

Discerning an increase in the scale of these events and reacting to them requires knowing about them.

At the time this prophecy was given, it could be many months or years before people heard about various disasters—and many they would never hear about at all, much less be able to put together the fact that catastrophes were on some kind of global increase.

Only with the proliferation of newspapers and other forms of mass communications did this become remotely possible. Yet the level of awareness and consequent fear in many that Christ speaks of implies an even greater availability of information—possible only since the development of rapid electronic communications.

In any case, only with the technological advances of the last few years has it become possible for the events in Revelation 11 to occur—for people around the world to see the fate of God's final two witnesses.

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These two witnesses, reminiscent of other biblical prophets like Elijah and Elisha, will carry God's final warning to the world in the last 3 1/2 years leading up to Christ's return.

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days . . . When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them and kill them.

And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

"Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations will see their dead bodies' three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

And those who dwell on the Earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the Earth" (verses 3, 7-10).

Note that people the world over will be able to see their dead bodies during the 3 1/2 days that they lie on display in Jerusalem. This was not possible before satellite television, portable communications devices and the Internet. Again, only in the last few years has it become possible for this prophecy to be fulfilled. It still lies in the future, of course, but only now it is clearly possible for this to take place.

Will this generation see God's Kingdom established on Earth?

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We have seen how seven biblically prophesied circumstances could not have come to pass until recent times. In fact, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was clearly a major turning point in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, as was the acquisition of the hydrogen bomb by the two superpowers of the 1950s that led to the period of mutually assured destruction.

All has now become possible. This, in turn, makes it much more likely that our generation will live to see Jesus Christ return and establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. After all, Jesus Himself said that once these things begin, the generation alive at that time "will by no means pass away till all these things take place" (Matthew:24, 34).

It's both sobering and encouraging to think that we appear to be living in the generation that will ultimately witness the most important event in the history of mankind.

As Jesus Christ tells His followers in Luke: 21:28, "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

If indeed the second coming of Christ is going to occur in this generation, the world as we know it will be changed forever.

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The Day Jesus Christ Returns

May the grace of God be with you always --- Amen.

Pastor Andy Anderson

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