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BRIDGES FOR PEACE

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Photo by Isranet



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Unstable, uncertain, and volatile are strong words that seem weak when describing the world we live in today.





Every news report we hear reveals another crisis, and it seems most areas of human existence are affected. Financially weak currencies, unstable stock markets, and overwhelming national and personal debt have many analysts theorizing that we are on the brink of a recession of a magnitude not seen since the great depression. Morally, we live in an age that would shock our grandparents. Then there is the threat of world war, as radical Islam confronts Western civilization. Physically, we see an increase in earthquakes, floods, tornados, and droughts. We are reminded of the words of Yeshua (Jesus): *“For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows”* (Matthew 24:7–8).

In Israel, we are affected by all of the above. Scientists tell us that we are overdue for a huge devastating earthquake, and that drought conditions have impacted the Sea of Galilee, Israel’s main source of fresh water, to the point that it is almost so low that it cannot be pumped. Threatened by Hamas, Hizbullah, Syria, and Iran, Israelis never know when the next big conflict will erupt. Nearly one quarter of the population lives under the poverty line, and food prices are soaring. Morally, Israel faces the same problems as the rest of the world.

These are the signs of the times. The Bible’s prophecies are being fulfilled. At Bridges for Peace, we say, Why just read about Bible prophecy when you can be a part of it? It’s

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just a slogan—but so true, and the fact is, we *are* a part of it! In my lifetime, I have seen many Bible prophecies literally fulfilled. I am sure the prophets would have loved to see the fulfillment of their words, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But, God in His sovereignty and wisdom chose that you and I would be alive today to see the fulfillment of God's promises. Not only are we privileged to *observe* God at work, we have the awesome privilege of being *involved* in Bible prophecy!

HOW IMPORTANT IS BIBLE PROPHECY TO GOD AND WHY?

Did you realize that more than 37% of the Bible is prophetic in nature? Bible prophecy is a gift to the people of God because it is one of the proofs of the authority and authenticity of the Bible. As we see the promises of God being fulfilled, we are filled with awe and an understanding that we can trust God to keep His Word. Prophecy reveals the power and wisdom of God and provides instruction and warning. It is a message of courage and hope for God's children. It is also a mandate to action, as God is looking for participants not merely spectators. Properly studying, understanding, and identifying with God's plan promotes our involvement with God and His plans. Henry Blackaby, in his book *Experiencing God*, says that we should find out what God is doing and get involved in it.

So, why don't pastors preach on prophecy more? There are many reasons. My husband and I attended a very fine Bible college in Springfield, Missouri. We were taught doctrine, biblical studies, and much more, but not one of our required courses covered Bible prophecy! You could take an elective on the subject, but most students didn't. This is true of most Bible colleges and seminaries. Pastors who receive an education in biblical interpretation and doctrine often don't feel confident about teaching Bible prophecy because they haven't been taught.

Some don't teach on the subject because they don't want to promote escapism, fatalism, or irresponsibility. Those who believe in a pre-tribulation rapture are often accused of escapism, but Christians in many parts of the world today, such as Sudan, are already undergoing persecution. There is no guarantee that we won't experience tribulation. Yeshua said, "*In the world you will have tribulation*" (John 16:33). Even if you believe in a pre-tribulation rapture that doesn't mean there can't be pre-rapture tribulation. Many believe in a mid-trib or post-trib position. It is not my point to argue the various positions. We must be ready to face whatever the future has to hold, knowing that Yeshua said, "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20).

When Tom and I were youth pastors many years ago, there was a man in our church who was fascinated with the topic of Bible prophecy. He was convinced that the rapture of the Church was coming so soon that there was no point in doing repairs on his home. His house was literally falling apart, but he refused to do anything about it. We should live our lives ready to be with the Lord tomorrow, but we should also buy life insurance. God didn't call us to irresponsibility. My father, Dr. David Allen Lewis, always said that he was "pan" trib, that it would all pan out in the end.

WHAT HAS DISCREDITED BIBLE PROPHECY?

The worst enemies of the message of Bible prophecy are some of its professed friends. Great harm is done to the message of God for the promotion of vain knowledge.

• WILD SPECULATION AND SENSATIONALISM

Credibility is destroyed when people become involved in speculation. When prophecy is treated only as a mere intellectual exercise, frustration sets into the minds of the teachers of the message as well as the hearers. To keep the attention of the "prophecy buffs," the teacher has to come up with material more sensational than the last teacher. Sometimes

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fanciful stories are promoted to “prove” Bible prophecy. Antichrists are discovered; dates are set for the rapture; water on the Temple Mount is the beginning of the river of water in Ezekiel; the Jerusalem Great Synagogue is the Temple, to name a few.



• FALSE REPORTING

A number of years ago, a story circulated about an increase in the vulture community in the Megiddo Valley, also known as the Armageddon Valley. Prophecy teachers were saying that they were gathering in anticipation of the battle of Armageddon. They said that it was a new kind of vulture and that the females were laying two to three eggs instead of the usual one, which meant that the vulture community was multiplying at a prodigious rate. But, what were the facts? My father asked many living in the Jezreel Valley, but no one had noticed any unusual vulture activity. In fact, he found from The Society of the Protection of Nature in Israel that the vulture population was instead a protected species in danger of extinction!

• FRUITLESS ARGUMENTS

Harsh judgments and cruel insults are hurled between Christians holding different end-time views. This is shameful. Think about it—All Bible-believing Christians agree on eternity. Yeshua is King and will reign forever. That covers most of the territory. Most of us agree on a literal millennium period, a 1,000-year theocratic kingdom on earth with Messiah reigning from the throne of David in Jerusalem. It seems ridiculous that brethren fall out or argue over a disagreement concerning three and a half years or seven years of time. Surely there is room for us to respect one another as believers, even if we don't agree with every detail.

My father used to say that he was willing to discuss these things with any believer who could control his own spirit. Over his 50+ years of ministry, people were always trying to convince him of their viewpoints. His response? “I have been studying the prophetic word since 1954. Frankly, I have not heard a new argument on this particular subject in the past two decades. Why is it so important to people to persuade others of their position on this minor point of doctrine? Of course I would like everyone to agree with my position, but I have laid that aside because there are much larger issues at stake in this end-time warfare. It is time to join ranks and confront our common enemies with the strength of unity. There are foundational doctrines that are a basis for fellowship such as the nature of God, the deity of Yeshua, but the doctrine of the pre-, mid-, post-tribulation rapture is not one of them. If your spirit is wrong, you will be ineffectual in the end-time struggle.”

Titus 3:9–11 says, *“But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning being self-condemned.”*

• THE NUMBER GAME

Revelation 13:16–18 talks about the number of the beast being 666. Over time, there has been much speculation about this numbering system and about the man who will be numbered 666. During World War II, there was widespread teaching about Mussolini being the Antichrist because of the title widely used of VV IL DUCE, which, in Roman numeral equivalent, is 666. In the past, various popes, Judas Iscariot, Nero, Napoleon, Stalin, and Mao T'se Tung were all identified as the final Antichrist. A Chicago pastor said that Hafez Assad, the former president of Syria, was the Antichrist.

“But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and useless.”

TITUS 3:9



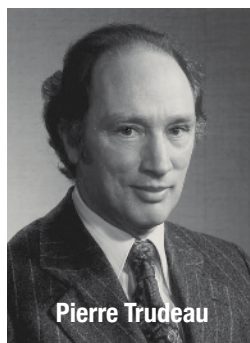
Benito Mussolini



Joseph Stalin



Mao T'se Tung



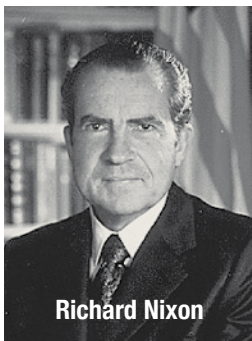
Pierre Trudeau



John F. Kennedy



Henry Kissinger



Richard Nixon



Ronald Reagan

666

Throughout history, various people from Mussolini to Mao T'se Tung to Ronald Reagan have been *positively identified as the Antichrist.*

In my father's collection are "proofs" that Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Menachem Begin, Anwar Sadat, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Henry Kissinger, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Sr., Saddam Hussein, and others were positively identified as the Antichrist, all with the number 666. Some wrote convincingly that John Kennedy wasn't really dead and was the Antichrist, "the beast" who would be healed of his deadly head wound and revealed to the world. Most of these men are dead. Credibility is lost when your candidate dies. Our emphasis should not be on the Antichrist but on the Lord Himself.

• THE DATING GAME

Many have attempted to set dates for the coming of Messiah. Repeated failed attempts to set the date cause disappointment and disillusionment. In the 1980s, there was a gentleman who wrote a book called, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could Be in 1988*. When the rapture didn't happen in 1988, he published a revised prediction for 1989 and continued updating it for several years following until he finally quit. There are over 300 biblical prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah that Christians recognize as having already been fulfilled. The Newer Testament has 257 references to the future literal return of the Messiah to this planet. I have every confidence that they too will be fulfilled. The Christian Scripture says that we will not know the time, "But of that day and hour no one knows not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

OUR JEWISH FRIENDS AND THE FEAR FACTOR



The Christian interest in Bible prophecy is a matter of concern to the Jewish community. Our discussions on Bible prophecy do not remain confined to the Christian community; our Jewish friends hear them too. Some fear that our whole purpose in building relationships with them in these days is that we can hasten the coming of the Messiah and precipitate their total annihilation. A few years ago, a *60 Minutes* television program was aired in the USA, which sought to understand why Christians support Israel. At one point, it was said that some Christians support Israel because of their eschatological expectations and that these Christians believe that the day is coming when two-thirds of the Jewish people will be killed and

the other third will convert to Christianity. Our Jewish friends were horrified. To them, it sounded like the total annihilation of the Jewish people. Many came asking me Bridges for Peace's motivation in helping them.

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After centuries of persecution, I have come to believe that the Jewish people have an existential fear of annihilation. The prophecy mentioned on the program is from the Jewish prophet Zechariah. It is not a “Christian” prophecy. The passage in question says: *“And it shall come to pass in all the land,” says the Lord, ‘that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die. But one-third shall be left in it. I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, “this is My people” and each one will say, “the Lord is my God”’*” (Zechariah 13:8–9).

Western thinkers tend to read everything in sequence, but the prophets wrote from a Hebraic point of view and sequential thinking is not always their style. We need to be careful when formulating our prophetic scenarios. We cannot be absolutely sure when things will happen. Some scholars think that the Zechariah passage was fulfilled when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 and over a million inhabitants were killed. In responding to my Jewish questioners, I told them that some Christians may be motivated by these things, but at Bridges for Peace, we are motivated by our love for God and His love for Israel and the Jewish people.

WHAT SHOULD BE OUR RESPONSE TO BIBLE PROPHECY?

This is one of the questions I have been asking the Lord. We observe the signs of the times all around us, what response should we have? Instead of engaging in doctrinal arguments, sensationalism, or speculation, we should simply STAY THE COURSE. God is fulfilling His prophetic word and we need to be faithful to God’s calling to us, understanding that by so doing we are participating in Bible prophecy. In order to stay the course, we need some tools.

• COMMITMENT

It is time true believers lay aside their differences and unite around common goals. It is astonishing to me that there are some 38,000 Christian denominations. Most of these originated from splits over disagreements. If we are going to be effective for the Lord in these challenging times, we must be committed to the Lord and to each other, regardless of our denomination, laying aside our arguments.

• CLARITY

We must ask the Lord to give us a clear understanding of our purpose, roles, and responsibilities. If we are to stay the course, we must understand the course. We must become serious students of the Bible. At Bridges for Peace, knowing the course includes understanding the pain of the Jewish people caused by centuries of persecution. We need to understand the way the world views Israel, faulty Christian theology on the subject of Israel, and how to counter it from the Word of God. It is important for us to monitor the events occurring around us. We must not just close our eyes to the wars and rumors of wars. We must discern the signs of the times and be ready to deal with their threats. It is vital that we understand our calling and focus our priorities accordingly while not expecting others to have the same calling. We must learn to respect the calling of God on the lives of others.

• PREPARATION

There are prerequisites to every kind of endeavor. Times of preparation are necessary. You can’t take English



102 before you have taken 101. As believers facing difficult times, we need to prepare ourselves physically, spiritually, mentally, and logistically, so that we will be able to run with endurance. The Apostle Paul told the Galatians, *“And let us not be weary in well doing”* (Galatians 6:9 KJV). Paul said this after enduring a stoning in Lystra, being imprisoned with Silas, and facing the opposition of many. He knew what it meant to face obstacles and not give up. The author of the book of Hebrews exhorts us to run with endurance: *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us”* (Hebrews 12:1).

Spiritually, we must recommit ourselves to time spent with the Lord; reading His Word, praying, seeking His face, praising and worshipping. No longer is a “once-a-week church attendance” Christianity enough. We need a 24/7 relationship with the Lord. We need to remember that we are not doing this in our own strength. *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” Says the LORD of hosts* (Zechariah 4:6). The Bible says that we need to also prepare ourselves mentally. *“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:13).

Logistically, we need to be practical and prepare ourselves according to the call God has placed on our lives and ministries. At Bridges for Peace, that means we needed to procure a storehouse in northern Israel and fill it with food to be ready to deal with emergency situations. In war-threatened Israel, my husband felt the Lord impressing him to buy a generator. We keep a supply of drinking water and live in a building with a bomb shelter. In these challenging financial times, we need to pay off our debts and live according to our income not our desires. Tom and I paid off all our credit card debt and are making careful decisions about spending. Some may need to step out in faith to do what God has told them to do. Don’t let things hold you back from fulfilling the call of God for your life. And everything we do should be done with excellence, as if we were doing it for the Lord Himself.

• TEAMWORK

It is absolutely essential that we recognize that we need each other. It is not the time to try to do it alone. There is blessing in unity (Psalm 133). First, we must remember that we are never alone! The Lord, our team captain, is with us, and we must trust Him. *“Thus says the LORD: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit’* (Jeremiah 17:5–8). And, we don’t need to be afraid. *“Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you”* (Deuteronomy 31:6).

We also need to appreciate the team that God has created. Any team is only really good if the members act as a whole and each pulls their weight with supervision to ensure the goal is met. Imagine a soccer game where some players hog the ball without thought of the other players. All they want to do is see how soon they can get the ball and show off their prowess, even if another player might be better situated to score a goal. But when players play together, passing the ball to each other and listening to the goalkeeper, they become a force to be reckoned with. That is the kind of cooperation that is needed in critical times. We



We need to be practical and prepare ourselves according to the call God has placed on our lives and ministries.





Photo by Isranet



need to be bonded to the Lord, listening to His every instruction, obeying in chorus with the others He has placed on the team. Remember, the key to teamwork is putting the needs of the project over one's own desires and concerns.

COOPERATING WITH GOD

Staying the course is not an easy task. It requires concentration, commitment, capability, teamwork, and endurance. Bridges for Peace has made the decision to “stay the course” that God has given us. Have you? Will it be easy? Maybe not, but we will do it with the help of the Lord and as a team who knows the call is more important than our individual needs.

Yes, Yeshua spoke of the day when there would be wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famine, pestilence, offence, hatred, false prophets, and apathy (Matthew 24). In our world today, we see all these signs of the times. What should our response be? Not wild speculation or dogmatic proclamations but faithful cooperation in the things God is doing today; staying the course that He has laid out for us. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.” MATTHEW 24:45–47

Rev. Rebecca J. Brimmer

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All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Many pastors, Bible teachers, and lay people have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding “yes!” It is our hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. *“For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 2:3).

