

Gary Ray

WHY and HOW

to TEACH on

PROPHECY

and

ESCHATOLOGY

Counsel and encouragement from one who has served in
pastoral ministry for more than 30 years

iAMAWATCHMAN.com

Gary Ray

WHY and HOW
to TEACH on
PROPHECY
and
ESCHATOLOGY

Counsel and encouragement from one who has served in
pastoral ministry for more than 30 years

iAMAWATCHMAN.com

WHY AND HOW TO PREACH ON PROPHECY AND ESCHATOLOGY

I Am A Watchman
Publications

I Am A Watchman Publishing
Union City, California

WHY AND HOW TO PREACH ON PROPHECY AND ESCHATOLOGY
Copyright © 2018 by iamawatchman, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

The I Am A Watchman ministry desires to equip and encourage believers, reach the lost, and see individuals prepared for the return of the King.

I Am a Watchman Publications
www.IAmAWatchman.com

Printed in the United States of America
ISBN - 9781642543421

First Printing, October, 2018
I Am A Watchman Publishing





Called to serve in a 'time such as this'

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I - THE REASON FOR THIS WRITING

INTRODUCTION	9
REAFFIRMING THE CALLING OF THE PASTOR	10

SECTION II - THE PASTOR AND THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

THE STRUCTURE AND MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH	14
--	----

SECTION III - AFFIRMING THE CALLING OF THOSE CALLED TO TEACH

A MESSAGE TO PASTORS	19
----------------------	----

SECTION IV - WHY MANY CHOOSE NOT TO PREACH ON PROPHECY OR ESCHATOLOGY

IDENTIFYING AND DEALING WITH THE EXCUSES	22
--	----

SECTION V - PREPARING YOUR LEADERSHIP AND CHURCH

PREPARING TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION	28
-----------------------------------	----

SECTION VI - IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

THOUGHTS ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION	33
A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF BIBLE PROPHECY	35

SECTION VII - LINKS AND RESOURCES

A RESOURCE DIRECTORY	66
ABOUT THE <i>I AM A WATCHMAN</i> MINISTRY	68

SECTION ONE
THE REASON FOR THIS
BOOKLET AND REAFFIRMING
THE CALLING
OF THE PASTOR

INTRODUCTION

Don't do the right thing the wrong way

Most everyone can do a few things well. One of the things I can do well is play the guitar. I can play by ear, read, write and arrange music, and can play a variety of styles—one of which is classical. The ability to play the guitar was not born out of a great appreciation of the arts. No, it grew out of a boyhood crush I had for my second-grade teacher who one day said, “Anyone who wants to learn how to play the guitar can spend time with me in a new after-school club.” Though I did not even have a guitar, I was the first to sign up, and out of a desire to do well for (if not show off for) my teacher, I excelled. When I was 14 years old, I expressed an interest in learning how to play classical music. Strange, right? Anyway, my parents arranged for me to meet with a gifted teacher just as the school year ended. He said he would be traveling for most of the summer, but gave me a book, much homework, a few words of advice, a pat on the head, and said, “we’ll meet in two months.”

Determined to master the classical style, I spent much time working through the music book my instructor gave me (an exciting book by the name, “A Collection of Etudes”). The name notwithstanding, I *was* excited, and was fascinated to learn that when playing classical guitar, the fingers on the players right hand (if you are a right-handed) are lettered P,I,M,A. The Collection of Etudes music book emphasized the importance of plucking particular notes with particular fingers (identified by PIMA designations). It sounds rather straight-forward, but somehow I transposed the positioning and, for lack of a better phrase, began playing in a PAMI format rather than the PIMA format. This is akin to a right-handed person bowling left-handed or batting with the right hand positioned under the left hand. In short, though I practiced and practiced, my progress was slow. I was doing a good thing the wrong way.

Yes, I could play a few of the songs in the book, and with some difficulty even learned to master a few pieces, but because my approach to playing was compromised, I would never be able to be the musician I could be—or

better, God gifted me to be. After being corrected by my teacher, and several months of relearning and reorienting my thinking, I was on track and found new blessings. I'm sure you can recognize the spiritual parallel.

I have had contact with many churches and believers in my decades of ministry. I have observed, and have heard from many, that most pastors rarely boldly teach or preach on the subjects of Prophecy or Eschatology. I also see that there is a growing hunger for good information on these important subjects. Because the world is becoming inundated with false teachings regarding what will happen in the last days, I believe it is imperative that pastors present strong and clear teaching on the one-third of the Bible that pertains to Prophecy and Eschatology. I believe there is a great need to preach the whole counsel of God in such a time as this. My prayer is that this booklet will be helpful as you take-up that challenge.

REAFFIRMING THE CALLING

God seems to be on the move. More prophecies have been fulfilled in the last approximately 70 years (since Israel was reborn as a nation in May 1948), than in the 700 years leading up to that point in history. There have always been wars and rumors of wars, but no one can doubt that in recent years there seems to be a convergence of significant (and prophetic) happenings. Israel is thriving; she has been victorious in battle despite overwhelming odds, Jerusalem has become a 'cup of trembling' and a 'burdensome stone' (Zech. 12:2-3) for the nations, there is talk of war and peace agreements, and the tiny nation of Israel dominates the news and UN diplomacy.

There has been a surge in celestial anomalies, weather changes, larger-scale earthquakes, volcanic activity, and animal die-offs—just as Hosea 4:3 prophesied there would be in the last days.

Observing the abundance of fulfilled prophecies and signs should lead the believer to sense that the return of the Lord is near—and should compel pastors to communicate a sense of urgency regarding the need to be spiritually ready. Jesus said,

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.”
(Matt. 24:32-33)

Teachers and pastors are commanded to watch for the signs that announce the return of the King, and boldly communicate (by teaching the whole of Scripture) what God is doing and what God will do in the future. I believe this is where the church falls short today. Many watchmen, particularly in the west, report that strong, clear teaching on eschatology is not a prominent part of the teaching or preaching ministries in their home church. This booklet is designed to exhort and encourage—it addresses the mandate to ready listeners for the Rapture and return of Jesus, and notes both why this is not done, and how to do it.

Approximately one third of the Bible addresses the topics of prophecy or eschatology. Yet, many, many churches do not thoroughly address these subjects. Though there are challenges associated with preaching on certain passages, the calling is clear. Paul said,

“For I did not shrink back from declaring to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and the entire flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood...” (Acts 20:27-28)

Leaders must lead. We must view God’s word of exhortation to Ezekiel as being timeless—applicable to leaders then and now. In Ezekiel 3 we read God’s command:

“When I say to the wicked, you shall surely die, and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at your hand. Yet if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul.”
(Ezekiel 3:18-19)

Teachers and *preachers* must be *watchers* and *warners*, and must not neglect to proclaim the fullness of God’s Word. God warns that those called to teach must both encourage and exhort or are in danger of judgment. Yes, it *is* easier to teach/preach on heaven, love, grace, and mercy, but leaders must follow the example of Jesus, who preached on love and grace, but also boldly preached on giving, sacrifice, commitment, witnessing, and the last days. Pastors are called to “feed the church” (Acts 20:28), “for they watch out for...souls, as those who must give an account” (Hebrews 13:17).

SECTION TWO
THE STRUCTURE AND MINISTRY
OF THE CHURCH

THE STRUCTURE AND MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

About the word, CHURCH

The word 'Church' is not found in the Old Testament. The New Testament (Greek) word for Church is Ecclesia. It means a formal assembly of individuals sharing a common purpose and bond. Below is an example of how the word Ecclesia is used in Scripture:

"The Church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened, and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, with all living in the fear of the Lord." (Acts 9:31)

The gift of the Church

The church is God's gift to this age. Jesus came, died, and rose again so that the Spirit could come (at Pentecost) and the Church established (Acts 2). In Matthew 16, Jesus noted that Peter's statement, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" would be the foundation stone (truth) upon which the Church would be built. Jesus is, in fact, the cornerstone of the church (1 Peter 2:6; Isaiah 28:16). The creation and establishment of the Church have come at great cost, and is the result of a divine work. To be called to share in His Kingdom's work is a great privilege—to be called to lead in ministry is a profound honor.

The work of the Church has been entrusted to humans, and thus has not been without blemish over the centuries. However, the ministry and purpose of the Church are sacred. The Church is a gift of God, birthed by the Holy Spirit and designed to provide an organizational structure for believers to effectively

carry-out the ‘Great Commission’ of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, the Church is to be respected and supported. Note what the Apostle Paul said:

“He intends that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known.” Ephesians 3:10

A BIBLICAL OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE, MISSION, AND OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

The mission of the New Testament Church

The mission of the Church is to accomplish the Great Commission noted in Matthew 28:18-20.

“Go...and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

From this passage we see the mission of the church is three-fold

- 1. The Church is to make disciples:** Through the ministries of the Church, believers should grow to be the disciple God calls them to be through involvement in service, Christ-centered worship, fellowship, witnessing, loving, forgiving, and prayer.
- 2. The Church is to teach:** Through the ministries of the Church, believers should learn the Word and be equipped to share and teach the Word.
- 3. The Church is to baptize:** Certainly, the Great Commission refers to the act of being baptized, but it also points to the Church’s mission to effect changed hearts and lives. One evidence of having a spiritual impact in

one's mission field is to witness the public testimonies (baptism) of those making new commitments to live for Jesus. The Head of the Church is Jesus Christ. In Scripture, believers are referred to as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27), and the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3; Rev. 19:7).

The structure of the Church

The structure of the New Testament Church originates with God, not man. Scripture notes that it is God Himself that draws individuals to His Church.

“But in fact, God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.” (1 Cor. 12:18)

The grace of God initiates the invitation for individuals to come to faith and become a part of His Church. The Holy Spirit then equips and enables (gifts) believers so that they are positioned to effectively carry out the ‘Great Commission’ work. In addition to imparting abilities (such as the gift of teaching), the Spirit has established Offices or particular leadership roles in the Church. Ephesians 4:11-12 references these leadership positions:

- **Pastor:** A Pastor provides spiritual leadership and teaching support to a congregation (1 Peter 5:2). A Pastor is also considered an Elder of the Church.
- **Overseer:** A general reference to the Pastor or Elders of the Church (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1).
- **Bishop:** This could be a general reference to a Pastor or Elder of a Church, or it could refer to individuals having leadership over more than one ministry area or body of believers.
- **Elder:** Assists the shepherd/pastor in providing spiritual guidance, instruction and administrative oversight for the church (Titus 1:5-2:15).
- **Deacon:** The term deacon means servant. The first deacons, chosen in Acts 6, led in service ministry and meeting the practical needs of the

fellowship. In Scripture, deacons are differentiated from Elders as they are not specifically charged with teaching or administrative responsibilities. (Acts 6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

- Teacher: A teacher is one who is gifted by the Spirit and called of God to teach spiritual truths in a formal way (Ephesians 4:11).

The gifts the Spirit gives, and the leadership roles the Spirit undergirds, are designed to help the Church accomplish its mission. In short, the Church is to...

- Be a “light” to the world (Matthew 5:14).
- Be “salt” (Matthew 5:13).
- Teach, reach, and baptize (Matthew 28:18-20).
- Preach the Gospel/Aggressively share the truth of God (2 Timothy 4:1-2).
- Follow Jesus’ example (1 John 2:6; John 13:15).

SECTION THREE

A MESSAGE TO THOSE CALLED TO SERVE AS PASTORS

A MESSAGE TO PASTORS

To serve as a pastor or teacher is an honorable and lofty calling. According to Scripture, pastors receive a special call from God and anointing from the Spirit to preach God's word, teach God's people, and lead in mobilizing believers to effectively carry-out the 'Great Commission.' It is a holy calling, and surely unimaginable reward awaits faithful servants. However, though the reward for God's shepherds can be great, so are the expectations. The Apostle James cautioned individuals not to desire to teach, for the Lord's expectations for those called to teach are high (James 3:1).

Consider this: What if you were blessed with the ability to speak German and Polish, and were somehow transported to the German/Poland border in the summer of 1940. You are aware that in just a few months the German army will overrun the region and make the city of Warsaw into a huge, horrible prison and ghetto—a place where about 400,000 will die over the next few years. What would you do? Would you say something? Wouldn't you feel compelled to warn those who were in harms way? Yes, I believe you would.

The danger facing this generation is just as real and insidious. Pastors and teachers must present the entire counsel of God, and emphasize God's prompting to warn of impending dangers. Note the following directives:

- Pastors must preach all the Word (Matt. 24:25).
- Pastors must teach God's truth (Jer. 4:22).
- Pastors must inform (Hosea 6:12).
- Pastors are to impart knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15).

The directives are clear and the expectations are high. Revelation chapters 2-3 records the Lord's message to the seven churches. The message is strong and sobering. Seven times the Lord says, "He knows." He **knows**

what is happening, and what is being taught in each church. In the English text, the message to each church is directed to the angel of each church. In the original Greek text, the word for angel is *angelos*, which literally means, messenger (or the one who delivers God's message). The context of chapters 2-3 indicates that the message has particular meaning for the ***pastor*** of each church. I share this to note how God holds pastors accountable to properly guard, prepare, teach, exhort, and equip His people.

The pastor is responsible for sharing the warnings and truth of God to the Church—the Bride of Christ. The great preacher, scholar and writer AW Tozier wrote: ***“It is a solemn thing, and no small scandal in the Kingdom, to see God’s children starving while actually seated at the Father’s table” (The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine).***

Pastors are God's chosen servants—and have the privilege and burden to share God's wisdom and warnings. Ephesians 6:10 encourages believers to be “strong in His might.”

I urge those who teach and preach to echo Paul's request for intercessory prayer:

“Pray that I may boldly make known the mysteries of the Gospel.”

(Ephesians 6:19)

SECTION FOUR
WHY MANY PASTORS
CHOOSE NOT TO PREACH
ON PROPHECY
OR ESCHATOLOGY

WHY many pastors do not teach on eschatology or prophecy

More than 8300 verses in the Bible pertain to prophecy or eschatology. Clearly, the subject is of great importance to God, and therefore should be a priority area of study for believers. And note: the emphasis God has placed on these topics has not gone unnoticed by the enemy. Satan does NOT want God's people to be informed or prepared. He favors sneak-attacks and ignorance. These preferences lead him to amplify every fear and exploit every weakness to steer ministry leaders away from addressing important subjects. *You're not ready, your people aren't ready, you'll sound strange, you'll be branded an alarmist, you'll cause dissension, people will leave, and your Board will become angry* are phrases Satan loves to whisper to those who dare to faithfully preach the whole counsel of God.

Teaching on prophecy and eschatology has become the preverbal monster in the closet—we're not sure if there *is* a monster in the closet, and we have *never seen* a monster in the closet, but we're afraid there *might be* a monster in the closet, so we decide to stay away from the closet. If I may follow this analogy, most parents that notice this kind of behavior in their children would likely address the problem head-on by taking their anxious child by the hand, turning on the lights, walking him or her to the closet, opening the door, and noting why they do not need to be afraid. How often we let fear get the better of us. Satan knows this and expertly holds a magnifying glass to our concerns and reservations. So let's open the closet door, see what is really inside, then consider action steps to deal with any small embers that can, if not dealt with carefully, become an unwanted fire in your ministry.

COMMON EXCUSES/CONCERNS/RESERVATIONS

- 1. I do not want to be associated with fringe or non-orthodox teachings:** Unfortunately, it is true that many who speak on last-

days subjects and are in the news have veered into rather sensational subjects that do not have biblical support (aliens, planet X, lost books of the Bible, Gnostic writings, etc.). Satan has attempted to muddy the waters and associate the important topics of prophecy and eschatology with confusion and non-biblical teaching. I believe good Christian leaders should not shy away from these subjects, but rather, should feel compelled to preach the whole counsel of God, address teachings that are misleading or in error, and equip congregants to be able to recognize false teaching and defend the faith.

- 2. I do not want to be associated with the many false teachers who have undermined the credibility of ‘the Church’ by wrongly interpreting Scripture while purporting to speak for God:** It is true that far too many have wrongly claimed they received insight from the Lord and preached on the subjects of prophecy or eschatology. For example, William Miller taught that the Lord would return in 1843 (and also, 1844), Charles Russell taught that the 144,000 sealed in Revelation 7 were the true followers of the Jehovah Witnesses’ Church teachings (and the total number of redeemed humans in heaven), and Harold Camping taught that the Lord would return in 1994, 2011 and 2015. Good teachers should call-out false teaching, and warn that very compelling false teachers will arise in the last days (Matt. 24:11). Believers must be taught to be able to identify false teaching and rightly defend the faith. The abundance of false teaching should lead pastors to preach on the subjects of prophecy and eschatology, not avoid it.

- 3. Eschatology is sometimes linked to cultic teachings:** For example, Joseph Smith taught that a more accurate version of Scripture is available via the Golden Plates of Nephi, Edgar Casey taught that the world would end via a pole shift, Nostradamus wrote of global calamity which would be announced by a comet. For most in our world, insight on *last days* happenings can include information from many sources—Hollywood, Gnostic writings, psychics, best-selling writers, etc. A good pastor will

teach that the only reliable source of information concerning the future is the Bible. Biblical prophecy is precise and accurate—in fact, biblical prophecy has a 100% accuracy rate. None of the ‘great’ psychics or non-Christian prophets can come close to matching the biblical record of prophetic precision and accuracy.

4. I do not want to be associated with those in recent years who have put undue emphasis on eschatology (either focusing on a few aspects of end-time teaching, or centering an entire ministry on last-days topics):

I believe the ministry of the Church should be balanced. There should be good worship *and* good teaching. There should be a strong emphasis on outreach *and* on discipleship. The teaching ministry should address what God has done and is doing *and* what God will do. Some, in my view, have put undue emphasis on blood moons, Shmita cycles, Hebrew Festivals, and setting dates for the return of the Lord. A balanced ministry will include the presentation of biblically-based eschatological-themed information so congregants will know what to expect in the future, and be positioned to be a strong witness.

- 5. Many people want their ears tickled:** This is, of course, a reference to 2 Tim.4:3 and Paul’s warning that in the last days most will want to receive soft reassurances rather than be taught sound doctrine. This is a sobering truth. It likely means that in the last days, most (not all, but most) good churches will not be the largest churches. Scripture notes that the masses will be attracted by teachings on acceptance, tolerance, heaven, mercy, and how-to/feel-good messaging. And though there is a place for that in church, the teaching ministry of a good church will reflect the harder, less popular teachings that Jesus is coming, the Antichrist is coming, judgment is coming, sacrifice is expected, a bold witness is commanded, etc. Being the pastor God wants you to be begins with a clear understanding of what your calling is—which is to build strong believers. Remember, strong is better than big. The goal is not to gather a crowd, but to build a true, strong, church.

6. People will leave if I emphasize the need to sacrifice, boldly witness, and to prepare for the imminent return of Jesus: There is no easy way to say this—yes, those who want a soft, non-challenging message will likely leave churches that boldly preach the whole counsel of God. There are exceptions, but the truth is, there seems to be a correlation between the presentation of high expectations from the pulpit (in terms of making congregants aware of what the Scriptural expectations for believers are) and lower attendance. The closer we move to the *day of the Lord* the less individuals will want to hear what God expects and what God is about to do. However, that does not change the pastoral mandate to, as God said to Ezekiel, “...*preach my Word to them whether they listen or not, for they are a stubborn and rebellious people*” (*Ezek. 2:7*). The choices a pastor must make are not easy, but they are clear. By faith, the pastor must make decisions designed to honor God, and trust that He will take care of the rest (in accordance with His perfect will). It is said that the great preacher AW Tozer had a church of about 150. Only about 120 gathered with the disciples of Jesus after the Lord’s ascension into heaven. On the other hand, Charles Spurgeon had a church of thousands before he was 20 years old. The size of your congregation is up to God, and not the primary determinant of your success.

I have served as a pastor for decades and have scars to prove it. I do not write these words callously or without some understanding of their impact. Later in this booklet, I will share thoughts regarding how to move toward a more balanced and bold preaching/teaching format. There are strategies that can be helpful, but here I want to urge pastors to honor God by faithfully communicating the fullness of His message, and trust that the Lord will take care of the rest.

7. It is easier to be a friend than a father: It is natural to wish to be liked, but it is wrong for a pastor to allow that proclivity to compromise his calling. Simply put, a pastor, by virtue of a bold and balanced message, will not be liked by all. Jesus exuded love, but was vilified, Amos was threatened, Isaiah was rejected, and Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern.

The goal then, should not be to be liked, but to be faithful. A pastor should consider himself more like a father than a friend—one who is charged to instruct, protect, guide, encourage, and prompt. This should always be done in love, but as is evident in the example set by Jesus, even when it is, some will become angry. This is unfortunate, and wrong, but should not negatively impact a pastor's commitment to being the teacher and spokesman that God has called him to be.

8. The more you ride point, the more you are exposed, vulnerable, and targeted for attack:

The statement is true, and the more you preach with boldness about what God expects of His people, and what prophecy reveals God is about to do in the midst of His people, the more you will be targeted for attack. It will be difficult. The attack will come from outside *and* inside the church. Because this is true, it is critically important for pastors to be pure. If there is a secret sin, it will be exposed, and your message will be silenced. If there is no sin to expose, uncorroborated allegations are likely to be made (a stellar reputation and strong support systems will help weather these storms). It is not my intent to discourage you—I want to prepare you. Helpful advice on how to guard your call is presented in the next two sections of this booklet, but for now let me strongly encourage pastors to 1) expect an attack 2) pursue purity 3) quickly acknowledge and properly deal with sin issues and 4) pray constantly (and seek intercessory prayer) for protection, focus and a hedge of protection against the attacks that are sure to come.

9. It will be difficult:

The bold pastor will be watched by the enemy, targeted for attack, sometimes misunderstood, and subject to criticism if the church does not grow as fast as some others. Being God's man has always been difficult—but will be particularly so in the last days. Elijah, Jonah, and Moses, all weary from the burden of leadership, each asked God to let them die. At one point a frustrated Moses cried out to God, "Did I bear these people? ...Why do you tell me to carry these people in my arms...?" (Numbers 11:11-14). The work may not be easy, but a great reward awaits the faithful. Persevere, lean on God, pray without ceasing, and know that your work does not go unnoticed by your heavenly Father.

SECTION FIVE

PREPARING YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM AND YOUR CHURCH

Preparing to implement the vision

Noted below are ten suggestions and recommendations pastors can prayerfully consider and adapt to meet their unique situations. Not every recommendation will be applicable or helpful, and there is not one (or three) suggestions that will resolve most problems. However, the principles presented below **are** valid and can help to minimize confusion, tension, and misunderstanding in your ministry.

- 1. Pray and seek prayer:** Tennyson wrote: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." The Apostle James noted that "the prayers of the righteous availeth much" (James 5:16). Prayer is your first and best line of defense. Prayer lays the track upon which God will send inspiration and counsel. Prayer establishes a perimeter line the enemy will find difficult to breach. Pray, pray, pray, and invite (urge) others to pray for you. Undergird your ministry, and your messages, in prayer.
- 2. Educate your leadership:** Abrupt changes in ministry (even for good) are seldom greatly appreciated. Meet and pray with your leadership. Share your heart and convictions. Show them the biblical precedents and commandments regarding teaching with boldness, preaching on prophecy, watching for signs, and preparing individuals for the return of the King. Take your leaders through Bible Studies on pertinent topics to help them understand and catch your vision.
- 3. Prepare your leaders for what may come:** In the previous section, I noted why many choose not to boldly preach the whole counsel of God (some may leave, criticism will come, messages will be misunderstood, Satan will attack, etc.). There is some justification for these concerns, but they do not, from God's point of view, represent a justifiable excuse to abrogate the calling God has extended to every leader and church.

- 4. Encourage your leaders to stand with you:** Managing change is often difficult even in the best of situations. Having pastors, elders, deacons, and leaders speaking to the congregation with a united voice can be very helpful. Find ways to convey that moving to a bolder and more balanced preaching format is not just the pastor's idea, it is the prayerfully considered desire of the leadership. Leaders should publicly affirm the plan, should introduce and recap the messages, should write affirming reviews of recent teachings for bulletins and newsletters, should affirm the plan at congregational meetings, etc. Do your best to communicate that changes in teaching is not the pastor's rogue idea, but rather, it is God's vision, which the pastor and leaders of the church have discerned and are faithfully trying to implement.
- 5. Start slow:** Seek God's leading in this, but consider the merit of easing your people into the often misunderstood topics of prophecy and eschatology. Rather than starting with a preaching series on the book of Revelation, consider educating the church on 1) how 1/3 of the Bible is prophetic in nature 2) how God wants His people to know what He has done and what He is going to do and 3) how pastors are called to boldly preach and believers are called to know the Word so they can witness.
- 6. Allow for a learning curve:** Because there is much misinformation (and misconceptions) associated with teaching on prophecy and eschatology, you may wish to consider augmenting Sunday morning preaching with special Bible Study and/or Question & Answer times. The material you present from the podium may likely be difficult for some to understand or embrace. The information you present will likely be contradicted by some Hollywood movie or best selling secular book. Invite questions—do not see them as a challenge but as a sign that your people are engaging with you in a new way.

- 7. Don't be afraid to communicate your limits:** It is OK to say, "I don't know," as long as that is followed with, "but I will find out." Making teaching on unfamiliar topics a joint learning experience makes the journey more tender and sweet. Most congregations do not expect their pastor to be an expert on every theological subject, and will appreciate the leader who is committed to learning.
- 8. Say it ten times:** The more your people understand you, the more they will stay with you. Continually communicate your objectives, calling, and goals when you preach on difficult subjects. Share that you challenge because you care, that calling is to preach the whole counsel of God, that your intent is not to scare, but to prepare individuals for what is to come. Share that your focus is not to sensationalize the misery of the Tribulation but to celebrate the victory that is promised to believers. Separate yourself from sensationalists. Make clear your objectives. State your calling as the pastor. Note that leadership stands with you. Repeat.
- 9. Borrow influence and link to credible sources:** I heard of a pastor who was challenged by his leadership when he shared that he was thinking about preaching on the Four Horsemen profiled in Revelation 6. However, all was well when it was shared that Billy Graham wrote a book titled, "The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse." When possible, include a mention of a book or video teaching by notable leaders who have done a good job addressing the subject of the day. This can be printed in a bulletin, sermon notes, announcement slides, etc.
- 10. Speak with love and end on a positive:** Angry preachers are not respected in today's culture. A strong but important message will not be heard, particularly by younger listeners, if it is not well supported by Scripture or shared in a biting or condescending way. I share this because a number of last days preachers have a sour, negative, sorrowful overtone to their messages. Pastors are not to focus their teaching on what is wrong with the world, or the terrible things happening in the world, but rather, on

what God expects and what God will do. Criticism and negativism are not spiritual gifts. Jesus taught on many difficult subjects, but always His message was marked by love, and people saw compassion in His eyes. People are more prone to listen if they know you care, if it is evident that you have researched your subject and come to the pulpit well-prepared, and if you end with a word of hope. Note that the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament Epistles and the book of Revelation all end on a high note—words full of hope and promise.

***“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity,
but of power and love and discipline.”
2 Timothy 1:7 (NASB)***

SECTION SIX
IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

Noted below are suggestions regarding how to implement the plan to preach boldly and clearly on the subjects of prophecy and eschatology.

1. Begin by presenting general information about the wonder and structure of Bible prophecy. A few excerpts from my book on Bible Prophecy are noted below

What makes Bible Prophecy different and superior to other predictive methods? There are several ways to predict the future—a few are noted below. Though it is true that some methods show some degree of accuracy, it is also true that no method of predicting the future comes close to the precision and accuracy one finds in biblical prophecy. A few of the common ways to predict future happenings are noted below.

- ➔ **Prediction based on signs:** This method of foretelling the future is often based on feelings or signs. For example, when Aunt Sue's shoulder begins to ache, she predicts rain tomorrow. The ancient maxim, 'Red sky at night, sailors' delight. Red sky at morning, sailors take warning' references a way to forecast the weather based on certain atmospheric conditions. This method of foretelling has its highest degree of accuracy when dealing with fairly local and near-future issues.
- ➔ **Prediction based on probability:** This method of foretelling the future uses past performance or happenings to predict future events. The old Farmer's Almanac is a good example—a sports betting pool is another. This method of predicting future events is limited, and a very poor method of predicting non-near-future events.
- ➔ **Web Bot:** This method of foretelling the future is newer and more sophisticated. It assumes that most, if not all humanity have a 6th sense—an intuition which draws them to gather information on

significant events. In our current digital age, it is possible to track Google-type search engine queries. And if for example, there is a statistical spike in searches for west

- ➔ **Distance seeing:** This method of foretelling the future focuses on ‘training’ the mind or utilizing ‘gifted individuals’ to see into the future, and/or observe non-local happenings. It is said that the US Military has experimented with this. The 2009 movie, “Men Who Stare At Goats” referenced this activity (‘Third Eye’ viewing or ‘Remote Viewing’ are related subjects). Again, though there is some interesting research on this predictive method, it should be considered highly questionable, if not dubious.
- ➔ **Clairvoyance:** This method of foretelling the future focuses on ‘gifted’ individuals who utilize different means to see into the future. Edgar Casey had dreams. Jeane Dixon had feelings. Nostradamus utilized nutmeg and wrote quatrains. Related to this are crystal balls, séances, Ouija boards, etc. This method of foretelling generally seeks information from the spirit world. It is dangerous and expressly forbidden in Scripture (Deut. 18, 19; Exod. 22).
- ➔ **Divine Revelation:** This method of gaining insight into the future relies on looking to Scripture for understanding. Scripture notes that the Word of God is sufficient for all believers need to know to live well in the moment, and to prepare for the future (2 Pet. 1:3, 4; John 20:30, 31).

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

How many prophecies are in the Bible - How do we know?

Many are aware that there are prophecies in the Bible, but few realize that more than 27% of the 31,124 verses in the Bible are prophetic. The J. Barton Payne's Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy notes that there are 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 prophecies in the New Testament, for a total of 1,817. These encompass 8,352 verses. There are two schools of thought regarding how to count Bible prophecies.

General: Some record prophecies in a broad or general way – this is appropriate but does reduce the number of prophecies by about 50%.

The Bible records that Jesus was a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. A general way to view the fulfillment of this prophecy is to acknowledge that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham—hence, one prophecy was fulfilled.

Specific: Most Bible scholars record prophecies in a more precise way—counting each part of the fulfillment of a general prophecy as an independent prophecy fulfillment. For example, the Bible notes that Jesus was a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. Therefore, four prophecies (not one) are fulfilled—Jesus was a descendant of Abraham (1), and Isaac (2), and Jacob (3) and David (4).

The precision of prophecy

Most psychics today speak in very general terms and offer what I call 'Fortune cookie-type counsel.' It is important to note that Bible prophecies are specific and measurable. And though many have tried, no one has been able to prove a Bible prophecy to be in error. There are approximately 1000 general prophecies

in the Bible; about 900 have come to pass, 895 have been verified to be true. 5 are unverifiable at this time, but as they are unverifiable they cannot be used to prove the prophecies are false. Jesus fulfilled more than 120 specific prophecies.

Scholars note the probability of Jesus fulfilling just eight prophecies picked at random is approximately 1 in 10^{17} . These odds approximate the likelihood of blindly picking the one marked silver dollar mixed in with coins two feet deep in an area the size of Texas. Scholars have noted that the probability of Jesus fulfilling just 48 prophecies is 1 in 10^{157} – that is one, followed by 157 zeros, which is roughly the number of atoms in the universe.

It is not difficult to illustrate the precision of Bible prophecy. Ezekiel 4 provides one example. The prophet Ezekiel wrote at a time in history when his nation, Israel, had fallen to invaders. Many were forced to serve as slaves in Babylon. Ezekiel chapter 4 notes how long it would be before Israel would again be a sovereign and independent nation. Let's take a look at this prophecy.

Ezekiel chapter 4 records that the prophet was bound on his left and right sides for a certain number of days. The number of days (430) prophetically point to the number of years it would take before Israel would be restored as a nation (Ezek. 4:4-6). To represent the duration of Israel's and Judah's judgment, respectively, Ezekiel was bound with cords and lay on his left side for 390 days, and on his right side for 40 days (Ezek. 4:4-8). Again, the 430 days (390 days for Israel plus 40 days for Judah) in Ezek. 4:6 represents 430 years. Jeremiah prophesied that the period of captivity would last exactly 70 years. Historians note that Babylon captured Israel (and took inhabitants away as slaves) in the spring of 606 BC and that exiles were allowed to return precisely 70 years later (just as foretold) in the spring of 536 BC.

The fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy of 70 years of exile (Israel not being an independent nation) took place in 536 BC when exiles returned to Jerusalem. However, that still left 360 years of judgment to be served (430 - 70 years = 360 years). Though exiles were allowed to return to Israel, Israel would remain part of the Persian Empire for some years. One might ask: What happens 360 years later? Did Israel become an independent nation at that time (176 BC)?

The answer is no. In fact, when Jesus ministered on the earth, Israel still had not re-established as a nation. At the turn of the 20th century, Israel still had not become an independent nation, and this is why.

Leviticus 26:18 indicates that in the face of stubborn rebellion, the Lord “will punish you seven times more for your sins.” Many Hebrews returned to Israel, but most quickly fell away from true faith. Therefore, the 360 years noted were to be multiplied by seven, equaling a total of 2520 biblical years [360 day years]. To convert the 2,520 prophetic years into solar [365.25 day] years, one must multiply 2,520 by the 360 days in the prophetic/biblical year (907,200 days). The next step is to divide 907,200 days by 365.25 (the length of a solar year). The answer is 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days. Therefore, Ezekiel’s prophecy indicates that the end of Israel’s displacement/judgment would occur 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days after the end of the Babylonian exile (which took place on July 23, 537 B.C.). When one adds 2,483 calendar years, 9 months, 21 days to July 23, 537 BC (the year in which the Babylonian captivity ended), they arrive at May 14, 1948 (the precise day Israel regained their independence under UN Charter).

BIBLE PROPHECIES PRINCIPALLY FALL INTO ONE OF THREE CATEGORIES

Prophecies concerning Israel: There are many prophecies about the land of Israel. They speak of the formation of the nation of Israel, wars against Israel, the exile of the Hebrew people and their return to the land, the restoration of the nation of Israel and prophetic events in and near Israel in the last days.

Prophecies concerning the Gentile World: Many prophecies profile the rise and fall of Gentile kingdoms; for example, Daniel 11-12 presents more than 100 such prophecies.

The Messiah: There are several hundred specific prophecies concerning the Messiah. During His first coming the Messiah fulfilled more than 120 specific prophecies – scores more will be fulfilled in the last days.

THERE ARE FOUR PROMINENT CONCENTRATIONS OF PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT

The 100-year period surrounding the birth of Israel (roughly 1450—1350 BC) marks the first significant concentration of prophetic fulfillment. During this time Moses led the Hebrews out of Egypt and Joshua led Israel to possess the promised land. Prophecies include:

- ➔ God told Abraham that from him would come a nation.
- ➔ God revealed the nation's borders.
- ➔ God foretold of an upcoming time in Egypt.
- ➔ God foretold that plagues would befall Egypt.
- ➔ God foretold of Israel's new home in the new land.
- ➔ God foretold that Israel would eat quail and manna as they traveled in the wilderness with Moses.
- ➔ God revealed which armies Israel would face, and conquer.

The period surrounding the exile of Israel (roughly 620—520 BC) marks the second significant concentration of prophetic fulfillment. During this time Israel turned away from the Lord, was overrun by Babylon, served 70 years in captivity and then returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. Prophecies include:

- ➔ Judah would make treaties with other nations but will fall.
- ➔ The northern kingdom would fall first, followed by Judah and Jerusalem.
- ➔ The “Jews would be scattered.” (Deut. 28:64; Ezek. 36:17-24)
- ➔ Invaders would destroy the Temple.
- ➔ The people would be taken away in bondage for 70 years.
- ➔ The Temple treasure would be taken but returned.
- ➔ A foreign king would issue a decree to return the treasure and provide for Hebrew rebuilding projects.
- ➔ Permission would be given to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The 100 year period surrounding the birth and ministry of Christ (roughly 5 BC—95 AD) marks the third significant concentration of prophetic fulfillment.

During this time the Messiah was born, crucified, and rose again, the Church was established, and believers received the Holy Spirit. Prophecies include:

- ➔ A star would announce the birth of the Messiah.
- ➔ The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.
- ➔ His birth would be associated with the slaughter of innocents.
- ➔ His ministry would be marked by miracles.
- ➔ His ministry would be in the region of Galilee.
- ➔ He would be falsely accused, tried, convicted and crucified.
- ➔ He would rise on the third day.
- ➔ The New Testament Church would be born.
- ➔ The Gentile Church would bring the Gospel message to the world.

The final concentration of prophetic fulfillment will unfold in the last days. Many believe that we are now in the final period of prophecy fulfillment and that this last prophetic cycle began when Israel became a sovereign and independent nation (1948). During this time 'birth pains' will increase, the tribulation period will begin, and the Antichrist will come to power. Prophecies include:

- ➔ Knowledge and birth pains will increase (Matt. 24; Daniel 12).
- ➔ Jews will return to Israel (Zech. 8:7-8).
- ➔ The Hebrew language will once again be the predominant language spoken in the land of Israel (Zeph. 3:9).
- ➔ Israel will bloom and prosper (Isaiah 35).
- ➔ A confederation of 10 nations will attack Israel (Psalm 83).
- ➔ Destruction will befall the city of Damascus (Isaiah 17:1).
- ➔ There will be technology for global commerce (Rev. 13:16-18).
- ➔ The Gospel preached to all (Matt. 24:14, 28:18-20).
- ➔ A peace agreement/covenant will be signed (Daniel 9:27).
- ➔ Permission will be given to rebuild the Temple (Matthew 24:15).

WHY IS THERE SUCH AN EMPHASIS ON PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE?

The gift of prophecy is an expression of God's love. Because He loves us, He warns us. God wants His people to know He is aware of what is happening, and what will happen. Prophecy is given as an empirical proof for the existence of God. It shows God is master of past, present, and future, and can be used to validate the integrity of Scripture. The 100% accuracy rate of biblical prophecy is unmatched among the religious writings of the world.

Speaking of prophecy, the prophet Isaiah noted: "I declared them (prophecies) to you long ago, before they took place I proclaimed them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them...'" (Isaiah 48:5). God uses prophecy to declare that He is the author of all that is good. He is in control, He has a plan for the future, and nothing takes Him by surprise. Noted below are a few verses which provide insight regarding what God will do in the last days.

Key Verses

- ➔ "But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book UNTIL the time of the end...many shall run to and fro but knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4). *This verse indicates that the ability to understand the meaning of the more difficult Bible prophecies will increase in the last days.*
- ➔ "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Joel 2:28-31). *This verse indicates that God will provide insight to His moving in the last days via dreams and visions. Non-clergy members will receive these visions.*

A syllabus of prophetic language

The language of prophecy: The language of the Old Testament is Hebrew. Therefore, it is essential to interpret Old Testament prophecies in light of ancient Hebrew culture. For example, in our culture, someone might say, "After I watch the Hawks and 49ers on the 60" plasma, I'm going to drive the Ford to SeaTac then catch the Red Eye to the Windy City. Most today would have little difficulty understanding that sentence. However, if we went back in time just 100 years the sentence would not make sense. Remember, Bible prophecies are more than 2000 years old, and are presented in a different cultural context. Therefore, interpreting prophetic words and phrases must be done with great care. A few common words with uncommon meanings follow.

- ➔ Days = often equal years.
- ➔ Week = a week of years or 7 years.
- ➔ Biblical years = 360 days (the ancient calendar followed a lunar cycle).
- ➔ Animals can be used to represent kings and kingdoms.
- ➔ Wind = can indicate a war or a unique working or moving of God.
- ➔ Water = can indicate life or cleansing; it can also represent judgment.
- ➔ Oil = can be a symbol of blessing.
- ➔ Virgin = often signifies purity.
- ➔ Prostitute/harlot = unfaithful or false church.
- ➔ Yeast = often represents sin.
- ➔ The numbers 3, 7, 10, 12, 40, 70, 120, 1000, 144,000 have spiritual (and symbolic) importance.
- ➔ A generation = 40, 70 or 80 years (depending on the verse or context).
- ➔ Fire and various signs in the heavens warn of or announce divine judgment.
- ➔ End days/Last days/End times = the period from Pentecost to the end of the Great Tribulation.
- ➔ Birth Pangs = The end of the Last Days to the beginning of the Tribulation period. During this period 'troubles' on the earth will intensify.
- ➔ The Rapture = A catching-up and rescue of believers in Christ prior to the outpouring of God's wrath profiled in the book of Revelation.
- ➔ The Tribulation = The last 7 years.
- ➔ The Great Tribulation = The last 3 ½ years.
- ➔ The Millennial reign = Jesus' final reign on earth (understood as a literal period of 1000 years).

2. Emphasize the relevance of studying Bible prophecy by presenting information on prophecies that have been fulfilled in recent decades. A few examples are noted below.

- **The scattering of the Jews:** This happened as a result of a series of failed uprisings against the Romans to gain independence. This did not begin to end until 1948 (when Israel was reborn as a nation). "...And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them..." Ezek. 36:17-24.
- **The Hebrews will return to the land of Israel:** The exodus back to Israel began in earnest by 1948 and is happening in great numbers even now. "This is what the Lord says: 'I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem...'" Zech. 8:7-8
- **The cities of Israel will be rebuilt:** The rebuilding of Israel these last 70 years has been amazing. Israel leads the region in agriculture, economy, education, and medical research. "I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God." Amos 9:14-15
- **Israel will become a nation in a day:** This very strange prophecy was fulfilled when, by UN Charter, Israel became a sovereign and independent nation by the stroke of a pen in May 1948. "Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come...she delivers a son. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children." Isaiah 66:7-8
- **The Hebrew language will return to Israel:** Many do not recognize that because the Jews were scattered and Israel was occupied by various nations through the centuries, Hebrew was not the primary language in the land of Israel for more than 1000 years. Yet, in fulfillment of this prophecy, it is today. Note: Israel is the only nation in the world to be

displaced for more than 1000 years and then reestablish as a nation. "For then I will return to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him..." Zeph. 3:9 (KJV)

- ➔ **Israel will prosper:** It is clear that Israel's recent prosperity is disproportionate to that of the nations which surround her (Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Syria, etc.). This is not because Israel has received financial backing from America – Russia and various Arab states have provided significant military and financial support to the nations surrounding Israel. It is because of the grace of God, and is the fulfillment of prophecy. "I will increase the number of men and animals upon you, and they will be fruitful... I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 36:11).
- ➔ **The new or reestablished Israel will not be a divided kingdom:** Israel was a divided Kingdom for three hundred years (approximately 940 BC to its fall in 600 BC). It was restored as a nation in 1948 AD, and has been a united nation since that time, fulfilling the Ezek. 37:15-22 prophecy.
- ➔ **A king will not rule the restored Israel:** The returning Jews will have no king until Jesus returns (Hosea 3:4-5).
- ➔ **The red heifer:** A red heifer without blemish must be born and sacrificed to purify the Temple in Israel (Numbers 19:2-9). The Temple Institute has recently acquired a kosher red heifer.
- ➔ **Signs and wonders:** The fulfillment of prophecies will not convince the masses to turn to Jesus. Though Israel will be the focus of many fulfilled prophecies, most will not recognize Jesus as Messiah (Luke 19:41-42; Luke 13:34-35; Romans 11:25-26).

3. Reference news reports which are likely to support or contribute to near-future prophetic fulfillment. These may include...

- ➔ Several notable Embassies (including the US Embassy) relocated to Jerusalem in 2018. The recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is tied to prophecy.
- ➔ There has been serious discussion regarding dividing (partitioning) Jerusalem and Israel. Moves to 'divide the land' is tied to prophecy.

- ➔ There is continual conflict surrounding control of the Temple Mount area. The Temple Mount area is central in eschatological prophecy.
- ➔ Third Temple rebuilding plans and the birth of a Red Heifer. The building of the third temple and the resumption of sacrifices (including the Red Heifer) is tied to prophecy.
- ➔ The discovery of natural gas reserves under Israel. The last-days Gog-Magog war (Ezekiel 38-39) is prompted, in part, by the desire for 'spoil.' A desire for this newly discovered and untapped resource could prompt an invasion.
- ➔ Alliances between Russia, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. The Gog-Magog alliance that marches against Israel comprise the modern day nations of Russia, Turkey, Syria, and Iran.
- ➔ The development of chip technology that can be used to track individuals and control commerce. The development of this technology would seem to make possible the global dominance of the Revelation 16 Beast system.
- ➔ The development of AI technology that can be used to enforce the will of a world dictator.

4. Regarding the fulfillment of future prophecies, help individuals distinguish between what is clear, what is possible, what is probable, and what is error. An example of this is noted in the profile of the battle of Armageddon and the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog conflict on the following pages:

A REVIEW OF THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON AND THE GOG-MAGOG INVASION

The term Armageddon is one of the best known (and least understood) four-syllable biblical words. Some suggest the term Armageddon references a battle profiled in the book of Revelation; others suggest it references two or more conflicts, separated by a thousand years. Some argue that Armageddon does not refer to a battle at all, but to a geographic location. Of those who believe it is a geographic location are two groups – one believes it is a valley; the other teaches it is a battle in the mountains. Others note that the Battle of Armageddon is linked to (and the same as) the conflicts mentioned in Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17, while still others link the Battle of Armageddon with the engagements mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 (also called the Gog-Magog War). In this section I will provide an overview of pivotal battles noted in prophetic passages, and how these conflicts correlate with the Battle of Armageddon.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Satan loves confusion, doubt, and division. Those who do not know the truth are vulnerable to false teaching and can easily become discouraged when prophecies fail to unfold as bad teachers predict (as was the case which Jesus did not return in May 2014, or October 2015, or September 2017). Believers in Christ are to know His teachings and be able to “correctly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15b).

KEY PROVISIONS: In recent decades there has been a push to view the Bible as allegorical. Many now hold that the Bible may impart a few generally positive guiding principles, but it certainly is not a living, Spirit-inspired message from God to be taken literally. Many faulty approaches to interpreting Scripture flow from this corrupt view. In researching this vital subject and writing this article, I followed the most common hermeneutic practices (procedures governing the interpretation of Scripture) established by conservative leaders of the historic

Christian Church. These guiding principles include:

- ➔ A belief that the Bible is accurate, true, and inspired.
- ➔ A belief that major prophetic sections of the books of Revelation and Ezekiel are written in chronological order.
- ➔ A belief that Bible prophecy is specific and every detail of a prophecy must be fulfilled for the prophecy to be considered fulfilled. [For example, if a prophecy notes that 6 nations will attack Israel, and only 4 nations attack, that prophecy would be considered not yet fulfilled.]
- ➔ A belief that some variance in detail does not negate the possibility of writers profiling the same event. [For example, the Gospel writers presented significantly different details when recording the events that took place on the Sunday following the cross.]

KEY TERMS: Understanding what Bible prophecy notes will happen in the future begins with an understanding of key biblical terms. These include:

- ➔ **Armageddon:** The word appears only once in the New Testament (Rev. 16:16) and references the location of the last (and decisive) battle before the return of Christ and commencement of His Millennial Reign. This battle will conclude the seven-year Tribulation period. During this battle the armies of the Antichrist and False Prophet will be defeated by Jesus Christ. The Antichrist and False Prophet will be judged and thrown into the pit of fire, and Christ will then usher-in His Millennial Kingdom.
- ➔ **Millennial Reign:** The literal 1000-year period in which Christ will reign on a renewed earth in fulfillment of the Isaiah 9:7 prophecy. His Kingdom and reign will be marked by peace and righteousness. His subjects will include the saints, Tribulation martyrs, and believers who survived the Tribulation period. Please view this linked video teaching for additional information on this vital subject: <https://vimeo.com/260667687>

- ➔ **The Gog-Magog War:** In general, this references vast evil armies moving against Israel. The primary biblical reference point for this war is Ezekiel chapters 38-39, however, the terms Gog and Magog are also referenced in Revelation 20.
- ➔ **Elam:** An ancient reference to southwestern Iran (Persia).
- ➔ **Gog and Magog:** In Genesis 10, Gog is mentioned as an individual (a descendant of Noah), and his land is Magog. Gog can also be understood as a title, meaning leader. I.e., Gog is the leader of the inhabitants of Magog.

WHAT IS CLEAR: Though there is debate regarding the interpretation of some prophetic passages, the vast majority of Bible Scholars agree that...

- ➔ The Psalm 83 War is NOT the Battle of Armageddon or the Gog-Magog War. The names of the nations or people groups attacking Israel, the scope of the battle, how Israel is victorious in the fight, and the aftermath of the battle are markedly different in the Psalm 83 War than in the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16-19) or the Gog-Magog War (Ezekiel 38-39).
- ➔ The Psalm 83 War can likely be linked to the destruction of Damascus (noted in Isaiah 17), and the expansion of Israel's borders or sphere of control (noted in Ezekiel 23, Jeremiah 49 and Isaiah 19).
- ➔ The Battle of Armageddon is profiled in Revelation 16-19.
- ➔ Ezekiel's eschatological profile of future Israel is chronological. Chapter 36 prophecies promise a renewed Israel, chapter 37 prophecies note a restored Israel, chapter 38-39 prophecies notes an invasion against a restored Israel, and chapter 40 prophecies profile the Millennial Reign of Christ in Israel.
- ➔ The Bible notes that there are TWO battles involving Gog and Magog. There is conjecture regarding the timing of the first Gog-Magog conflict, but virtually all conservative scholars agree that this conflict is profiled in Ezekiel 38-39 and will precede the Millennium. The second

Gog-Magog conflict will take place at the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ, and is profiled in Revelation 20:1-10.

WHAT IS NOT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR: Good Bible scholars are not in agreement on the following points regarding the wars.

- ➔ Whether or not the Psalm 83 War prophecy has already been fulfilled. Most believe that the Psalm 83 War is yet future, but some notable teachers hold that Psalm 83 prophecies were fulfilled in the battle for Israel that took place in 1948, or that Psalm 83 prophecies were fulfilled in stages, in conflicts that took place in 1948, 1949, 1967 and 1973. Those who hold this view believe that the Isaiah 17 prophecy regarding the destruction of Damascus is imminent but can occur separately from the fulfillment of the Psalm 83 prophecy by some years.
- ➔ Whether or not the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War is the same as the Revelation 16-19 Battle of Armageddon. What follows is a comparative analysis of the two conflicts.

WHY SOME BELIEVE THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON AND THE EZEKIEL 38-39 GOG-MAGOG CONFLICT ARE ONE AND THE SAME.

- ➔ In both conflicts, God intervenes and brings about the victory (which is different from the Psalm 83 War where Israel's army, blessed by God, secures the victory).
- ➔ The depiction of God's wrath in Ezekiel 38:19-22 resembles happenings associated with the Battle of Armageddon as profiled in Revelation 16. In both passages, God aids Israel by sending an earthquake and pestilence, and fire and hail fall from the sky.
- ➔ The Revelation 16-19 Battle of Armageddon directly precedes the Millennial Reign of Christ, which tracks well with the eschatological chronology in Ezekiel: in chapter 36 there is a promise to renew the

land of Israel, in chapter 37 Israel is restored as a nation, in chapters 38-39, Israel is attacked but supernaturally protected, and in chapter 40 the Millennial Reign of Christ begins.

- ➔ The immediate aftermath of the wars is similar when comparing Ezekiel 39:17-20 with Revelation 19:17-20.
- ➔ Gog and Magog are mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20.
- ➔ Historically, most have equated the Gog-Magog War with Armageddon.
- ➔ The devastating earthquake that flattens every mountain in Ezekiel 38 is very similar to the earthquake prophesied to take place during the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16.

WHY SOME BELIEVE THE REVELATION 16-19 BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON AND THE EZEKIEL 38-39 GOG-MAGOG CONFLICT ARE SEPARATE AND DISTINCT CONFLICTS.

- ➔ There seem to be more nations involved in the Battle of Armageddon than in the Gog-Magog War.
- ➔ In the Gog-Magog War of Ezekiel 38-39, it takes seven months to bury the dead, and Israelis utilize enemy weapons for fuel for seven years. This is not mentioned in the Revelation 16-19 Battle of Armageddon, and some argue that because the Revelation 16-19 battle happens at the end of the Tribulation period, there is not an interpretation allowing for the burying of the dead over a period of months, or for the use of enemy weapons as fuel for seven years. Note: The argument is that such activity would extend well past the end of the Tribulation period, and would not appear to fit well with the time that Jesus reigns on a supernaturally renewed earth and is providing for His people in what is known as the Millennial Reign of Christ.
- ➔ The purpose of God bringing victory to Israel in the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War is to bring Israel to repentance so that all acknowledge the Lord. The purpose of God moving to bring victory to Israel in the Battle of Armageddon is to deliver believers from the horrors of the reign of the Antichrist.

- ➔ In Matthew 24 and in Revelation 12, those who flee the wrath of the Antichrist run to the hills (a move encouraged by Jesus in Mark 13:14). However, the Gog-Magog War takes place in the mountains (which God will flatten via a supernatural earthquake). This likely puts this Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War before the mid-point of the Tribulation.
- ➔ In the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War, the name of the leader of the armies advancing against Israel is Gog—in Hebrew, the numerical value of his name is 12. In the Battle of Armageddon, the leader of the armies advancing against Israel is the Beast—the numerical value of his name is 666.
- ➔ In Ezekiel 38-39, the battle takes place in the mountains of Israel, and the battle does not seem to impact Jerusalem. In the Revelation 16-19 Battle of Armageddon, enemy forces are vanquished in a valley (Joel 3:2), and a river of blood runs through Israel (Rev 14:20).
- ➔ The Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War occurs when Israel is enjoying peace and safety (“...a nation of unwalled villages...” Ezek. 38:11). The Revelation 16-19 Battle of Armageddon takes place at the end of the Tribulation. At that time, the Antichrist is oppressing and threatening to destroy Israel, and some Hebrews have fled to the mountains of Petra (Revelation 12:6) for safety.
- ➔ The purpose of the Gog-Magog invasion is to “take spoil,” while the purpose of Armageddon is to destroy Israel once and for all.
- ➔ The primary direction of advancing armies in the Gog-Magog War come from the North—in the Battle of Armageddon enemies move against Israel from all corners of the globe.
- ➔ At the end of the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus Christ stands on Mount Olivet—there are no references to a divine presence appearing in the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War.

RESPONSES TO ANTICIPATED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE ABOVE
(see italics font)

- ➔ There seem to be more nations involved in the Battle of Armageddon than in the Gog-Magog War. *It is possible that Ezekiel 38 presents a partial listing of enemy nations (noting only key players or leaders of the engagement), and that the “every nation of the world” verse associated with the Battle of Armageddon is a general statement meaning many nations are involved in the attack. Neither passage provides conclusive evidence to argue for or against the view that the Gog-Magog War is the same as the Battle of Armageddon.*
- ➔ In the Gog-Magog War of Ezekiel 38-39, it takes seven months to bury the dead, and Israelis utilize enemy weapons for fuel for seven years. This is not mentioned in the Revelation 16-19 Battle of Armageddon, and some argue that because the Revelation 16-19 battle happens at the end of the Tribulation period, there is not an interpretation allowing for the burying of the dead over a period of months, or for the use of enemy weapons as fuel for seven years. *In the Gog-Magog War, the dead are buried—in the Battle of Armageddon the dead are vaporized by the power of God or savaged by birds and wild animals. The differences regarding the dead, and the fact that Israel will use weapons of war for fuel for seven years after the Gog-Magog War represents reasonably compelling evidence supporting the view that the Gog-Magog War and the Battle of Armageddon are two separate conflicts.*
- ➔ The purpose of God bringing victory to Israel in the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War is to bring Israel to repentance so that all acknowledge the Lord. The object of God moving to bring victory to Israel in the Battle of Armageddon is to deliver believers from the horrors of the reign of the Antichrist. *Again, these differences represent reasonably compelling evidence supporting the view that the Gog-Magog War and the Battle of Armageddon are two separate conflicts.*
- ➔ In Matthew 24 and in Revelation 12, those who flee the wrath of the

Antichrist run to the hills (a move encouraged by Jesus in Mark 13:14). However, the Gog-Magog War takes place in the mountains (which God will flatten via a supernatural earthquake). This likely puts the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War before the mid-point of the Tribulation. ***References to the location of the Gog-Magog War and the Battle of Armageddon are general and do not provide conclusive evidence that these are two different conflicts. Those who argue that Armageddon must take place in the Valley of Jehoshaphat must remember that the engagement will involve millions of soldiers and that soldiers and equipment will likely occupy the entire region. Also, the word Armageddon means the mound (mountain) of Megiddo or “Mountain of Assembly.”***

- ➔ In the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War, the name of the leader of the armies advancing against Israel is Gog—in Hebrew, the numerical value of his name is 12. In the Battle of Armageddon, the leader of the armies advancing against Israel is the Beast—the numerical value of his name is 666. ***The difference in how the key leaders are referenced (more than the difference in the numerical value of the names of the leaders) represents reasonably compelling evidence supporting the view that the Gog-Magog War and the Battle of Armageddon are two separate conflicts.***
- ➔ In Ezekiel 38-39, the battle takes place in the mountains of Israel—the battle does not seem to impact Jerusalem. In the Revelation 16-19 Battle of Armageddon, enemy forces are vanquished in a valley (Joel 3:2), and a river of blood runs through Israel (Rev 14:20). ***Again, references to the location of the Gog-Magog War and the Battle of Armageddon (and the inclusion of the detail about the ‘river of blood’) do not represent conclusive evidence that these are two different conflicts.***
- ➔ The Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War occurs when Israel is enjoying peace and safety (“nation of unwalled villages” Ezek. 38:11). The Revelation 16-19 Battle of Armageddon takes place at the end of the Tribulation, at a time when the Antichrist is oppressing and threatening to destroy Israel (and some Hebrews have fled to the mountains of Petra (Revelation 12:6) for safety. ***In the Hebrew text, the term “safety” can be understood as***

confidence. That is, though there is a threat of war (as there is today), Israel can be at peace and feel safe because they are confident in their military ability to check any threat against them. This is the primary counter-argument to those who teach that Israel will only live in peace and safety AFTER the Psalm 83 War and expansion of borders or AFTER they enter into a peace compact with the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27).

- ➔ The stated purpose of the armies involved in the Gog-Magog invasion is to “take the spoil,” while the purpose of Armageddon is to destroy Israel once and for all. *The distinction regarding motive represents compelling evidence supporting the view that the Gog-Magog War and the Battle of Armageddon are two separate conflicts.*
- ➔ In the Gog-Magog invasion, armies advance on Israel from the North. In the Battle of Armageddon, enemies move against Israel from all corners of the globe. *The different notations regarding the direction of the attack do not represent conclusive evidence that the Gog-Magog War and Battle of Armageddon are separate conflicts. The reference “from the North” can merely be a reference to the location of the base of the principal leader, the primary (but not sole) direction of the advance, or the direction that armies from the four corners of the earth gather and begin their advance.*
- ➔ At the end of the Battle of Armageddon, Jesus Christ appears and stands on the Mount Olives, but there are no references to a divine presence appearing in the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War. *Even though Ezekiel was writing before the birth of Christ, the distinction regarding the conclusion of these battles is significant enough to represent compelling evidence supporting the view that the Gog-Magog War and the Battle of Armageddon are two separate conflicts.*

REASONABLE CONCLUSIONS

- ➔ The Psalm 83 War prophecy could be partially fulfilled at this point in history, but it appears that not all Psalm 83 prophecies have been

completely fulfilled. It can be argued that the 10 nations or people groups identified in Psalm 83 have not, in coordination, attacked Israel as prophesied, and the stated result of the Psalm 83 War – that these nations would be “filled with shame and seek your name” (83:16-18) has not yet been realized.

- ➔ The Isaiah 17 prophecy regarding the destruction of Damascus can likely be associated with (or will immediately follow) the Psalm 83 War.
- ➔ The expansion of Israel’s borders will likely be associated with (or immediately follow) the complete fulfillment of the prophesied Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17 conflicts (see Ezekiel 23, Jeremiah 49 and Isaiah 19).
- ➔ The expansion of Israel’s borders (see Ezekiel 23, Jeremiah 49 and Isaiah 19) likely explains why the nations near Israel are not mentioned in the coalition of nations attacking Israel in the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War or Battle of Armageddon.
- ➔ The Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War is different from the Battle of Armageddon, and because it will take place in the mountains (where God’s people will later take refuge), the battle will likely take place before the midpoint of the Tribulation.
- ➔ There will be TWO wars associated with the terms Gog and Magog. The first is the war is profiled in Ezekiel 38-39, the second is profiled in Revelation 20 and takes place at the end of the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ.

PROJECTED TIME-LINE/SEQUENCE OF EVENTS (Note: It is possible that several of the prophecies noted below will be fulfilled simultaneously)

- ➔ The Psalm 83 War prophecy will be completely fulfilled.
- ➔ Damascus will be destroyed (Isaiah 17).
- ➔ Israel’s borders will expand (Ezekiel 23, Jeremiah 49 and Isaiah 19)
- ➔ Elam (southwest Iran) will threaten Israel but will be destroyed by a preemptive Israeli strike (Jeremiah 49:34-39).

- ➔ Russia (Rosh/Ros or Gog) will lead an invasion against Israel—advancing from the North (Ezekiel 38-39).
- ➔ The Antichrist will stand in a new Temple in Jerusalem and proclaim himself to be God (2 Thess. 2:4).
- ➔ The Antichrist will lead the armies of the world to attack Jerusalem in the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16-19).
- ➔ The Battle of Armageddon will conclude when Jesus appears on Mt. Olivet and defeats all enemy forces (Rev. 19:17-21) with the power of His spoken word. The Antichrist and False Prophet will be captured, bound, and thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Rev. 19:20).
- ➔ The Millennial Reign of Christ will begin after the Battle of Armageddon. After 1000 years, Satan will be released and will lead one last desperate battle against the rule of God. He will gather forces and attempt to attack Jerusalem in the second war associated with the terms Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7-10). Satan and all who follow him will be defeated. Then will come the final judgment and eternal reward for believers (Rev. 20:11-15).

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN BEFORE THE PROPHECIES CAN BE FULFILLED?

- ➔ Regarding the Rapture: NO prophecies need to be fulfilled before the Rapture takes place. The Rapture can come at any time. All are cautioned to be ready for the imminent return of the King (Matt. 24:44).
- ➔ Regarding the Psalm 83 War: Some aspects of this prophetic war may have been fulfilled, but as stated in the Responses To Anticipated Questions section above, several key parts of this prophecy seem to be yet outstanding. The fulfillment of this prophecy is likely among the next of the major prophecies to be fulfilled.
- ➔ Regarding the Isaiah 17 prophecy concerning the destruction of Damascus: This prophecy is likely linked to the Psalm 83 War and among the next of the major prophecies to be fulfilled.

- ➔ Regarding the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War: Ezekiel 38:4 notes that “I will turn you around...” That is, Russia will reverse its traditionally hostile position toward Israel and the Jewish people (Russia currently actively supports the enemies of Israel with weaponry, economic aid, and intelligence reports). Before this war, Russia must appear as the friend of Israel, and must coordinate a vast coalition of infantry to march against Israel with the stated purpose of “gaining spoil.”
- ➔ Regarding the Battle of Armageddon: This battle is profiled in the final chapters of the book of Revelation, which assumes that the Antichrist has been in control of world systems for several years, the new Temple has been built and the seven-year Tribulation period is nearly complete.

WHAT ARE THE CORE TAKE-AWAY TRUTHS IN THIS TEACHING?

- ➔ The Rapture can happen at any time. Tell others. Be ready.
- ➔ Many of the prophecies noted in this document can be fulfilled rapidly, or simultaneously. World events can change quickly—current alliances can be broken, and former friends can become fierce enemies overnight. It is not wise to project that it will take months or years for the political landscape to change so specific prophecies can be fulfilled. Believers should teach that latter-day prophecies can be fulfilled in the near future.
- ➔ Psalm 83 prophecies may have been fulfilled, but the Isaiah 17 prophecy regarding the destruction of Damascus and the multiple prophecies regarding the expansion of Israel’s borders are yet future. These conflicts may set the stage for the Antichrist to broker a peace agreement between Israel and her enemies.
- ➔ The prophecy regarding the sense of peace and security that Israel enjoys before the beginning of the Ezekiel 38-39 war may already be fulfilled (if peace and security are to be understood as confidence in their military strength). Still, that aspect of the Ezekiel 38-39 Gog-Magog War prophecy is but one of several components that need to be fulfilled for the Gog-Magog War to unfold as foretold.

- ➔ Believers are to proclaim what prophecy notes will happen in the future - In every battle God stands with Israel, the integrity of the Bible is validated, and the Lord desires that the wonder of it all draws people into a personal relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

5. Emphasize the imminent return of Jesus—focus on *that* He is coming more than *when* He is coming.

Scripture notes that believers are to anticipate the return of Christ, help others be spiritually prepared for the return of Christ, and maintain the view that the return of Christ can happen at any moment. The latter part of that statement capsulizes the Doctrine of Imminence, which affirms that the return of Jesus can happen at any time. This view *is* supported in Scripture (Phil. 3:20; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Thess. 1:10, 4:18, 5:6; 2 Thess. 2:1; 1 Tim. 6:14; Heb. 10:37; Rev. 22:20). The Doctrine of Imminence view was so dominant in the first-century Church that believers had to be admonished to be patient and continue in their work (rather than idly waiting for the return of the Lord) [2 Thess. 3:10-12; James 5:80]. Knowing that humans are prone to lose heart and focus, Jesus cautioned believers to expect His return and to keep working until He does (Luke 19:13).

Even if it was revealed that the Lord determined it best to return 100 years from now, there is wisdom in preaching readiness. Believers are to watch, work, and be ready for His return (Matthew 24:42; Luke 12:40). Many today (including this author and the I Am A Watchman ministry team), believe that the Lord's return is near. Pastor JD Farag said humorously, "I believe we're close, sooooo close. In fact, I can't believe we're still here." No matter when the Lord returns, the calling of every believer today is to ***be ready***.

The call to anticipate the Lord's return does not include setting dates. Matthew

24:36 and Mark 13:32 makes clear that the precise date will not be known. However, believers are admonished to look for signs, and told that when you see the fig tree in leaf, you can know that the Lord's return is near (Matthew 24:31-33). The fig tree represents Israel, and it can be argued that the nation of Israel, which was a desolate land less than 100 years ago, is blooming today.

False date setters will come and go. They are sent from the enemy and commissioned to sow seeds of doubt and confusion. As early as the first-century individuals were proclaiming that Jesus had returned. As early as the 3rd century the practice of setting dates for the Lord's return was common. ***A listing of more than 50 notable predicted dates for the return of Christ is included in my book on Bible Prophecy.***

According to Daniel 12:4 and Joel 2:28-32, in the last days knowledge shall increase, and many will receive dreams and visions from the Lord. It may be that at some point additional insight will be given regarding the season of the Lord's return. However, the day and hour of His return will remain a mystery. As such, the call for God's people is to remain watching, waiting, and busy about His business.

6. Note how an understanding of prophecy and eschatology supports today's calling to be a Watchman for the Lord. *Information on what a Watchman is to know and do follows.*

THE WORK OF A WATCHMAN

The English term **Watchman** is found more than a dozen times in Scripture, perhaps most notably in Ezekiel 33:1-9. In that passage of Scripture God makes it clear that the bold and faithful believer is to exercise a concern beyond self. The **Watchman** will know the Word, be attuned to the Lord's working and expectations, and find ways to inform and warn others about what God has done, what He expects, and what He has promised to do. Being a **Watchman** is biblical and God-honoring. The work of a **Watchman** is challenging, but I believe that when one lives to honor God, God will honor them. Noted below are thoughts on what the **Watchman** (and **Watchwomen**) should Know and Do. This information is provided by members of the [I Am A Watchman](#) ministry team.

16 CHARACTERISTICS OF A FAITHFUL WATCHMAN

BY JOE KERR

What is a Watchman? What does a Watchwoman do? The Hebrew term for Watchman is šōmêr. In Hebrew, it is expressed in many ways depending on the context and who or what it describes. The idea of keeping watch or a sense of "keep this safe" exists throughout Scripture.

Various forms of the term šōmêr occur 469 times in the Bible. Most of the characteristics can be applied to both Watchmen and Watchwomen.

16 Characteristics of a Faithful Watchman

God's definition of a Watchman is demonstrated throughout the Old and New Testaments. A Watchman is a keeper. A Watchwoman is trusted. Both protect. Each sees. All serve.

16 CHARACTERISTICS OF A FAITHFUL WATCHMAN

1. God is a faithful Watchman Who keeps [רָמַשׁ] His covenant and fulfills His promises. (Deuteronomy 7:9)
2. The Watchwoman keeps [רָמַשׁ] her word as God keeps His. She speaks the Word of God when she calls out a warning. (Daniel 9:4)
3. Watchmen are trusted keepers [רָמַשׁ] of the sheep. God trusts His flock to Watchmen until He returns. (1 Samuel 17:20)
4. A Watchman is a bodyguard [רָמַשׁ] who personally protects those in battle. Note that the Deuteronomy 7:9 reference to God uses the same Hebrew word!
5. Watchmen do not fight alone. Israel was keeping watch [שָׁמַר] over allies. Watchmen fight together. (2 Kings 9:14)
6. The Watchman is the trusted keeper [שָׁמַר] of those most important to the King. Watchmen see people as God sees them. (Esther 2:3)
7. A Watchwoman is a keeper [שָׁמַר] overseer, and producer of the King's resources. Building God's Kingdom depends on her diligence (Nehemiah 2:8)
8. A Watchman rebuilds broken homes. Shecaniah, keeper [שָׁמַר] of the East Gate, repaired the wall in front of his home. (Nehemiah 3:29)
9. The Watchman depends [שָׁמַר] on God's protection. Hurt people, hurt people. Healed people, heal people. Watchmen are healers and are quick to extend the mercy of God (Psalm 127:1).
10. A Watchwoman protects [שָׁמַר] strangers. Watchwomen have God's heart for widows, orphans, single parents, and refugees. (Psalm 146:9)
11. The Watchman heeds [שָׁמַר] instruction. Watchmen understand the order and hierarchy of leadership and submit to authority. (Prov. 10:17)
12. A Watchwoman is one who keeps [שָׁמַר] a clear vision of the time she lives in. She sees ahead and prepares herself and others. (Prov. 19:8)

13. Watchmen guard themselves [שומרי] from temptation. Their lives are clear demonstrations that God has power over the enemy. (Prov. 22:5)
14. A Watchwoman sees [שומרת] through the darkness. Hidden things are visible to her trained eyes because of her earnest prayers. (Isaiah 21:11)
15. A Watchman is a doorkeeper [שומר] opening the way for people to enter God's presence. Watchmen lead people to God. (Jeremiah 35:4)
16. A Watchwoman understands [שומרת] the power of worship. She lives in God's presence, both openly and silently. (Isaiah 56:6)

Watchmen and Watchwomen are responsible for much, see everything, but are seldom seen. They recognize the enormous task set before them, but few of those they watch will understand the Watchman's sacrifice. The enemy will attack, but God promises victory. The work will garner little praise, but those obedient to the call of God will one day stand before God on the day of judgment and hear Him say, "Well done My good and faithful servant."

God will reward those who finish well!

I AM A WATCHWOMAN

BY RANDI GRAY

I am a Watchwoman.

I am a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend.

I believe that what The Word says is true: about the past and the future. As a Watcher, I prepare for that future as a wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend.

The Bible states that no one will know when Jesus is coming again. Mark 13:32 reads, “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Yet we can be vigilant and decide to be prepared - whether Jesus comes in our lifetime, our children’s lifetime, or their children’s lifetime.

So what can we do to prepare ourselves and the ones we love?

Don’t be afraid

Facing the possibility that our time on earth could be winding down can be simultaneously joyful and challenging. What about our homes? Our coworkers and friends? Our spouses who don’t know the Lord? Wherever you are in life, it’s hard to think about leaving it all behind. Even with all the glories that Heaven promises – it is still the unknown, and thinking about leaving the places, and people we love is daunting.

Yes, facing these thoughts can be overwhelming. But Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid” more than any other statement in His lifetime. In fact, variations of ‘fear not’ appear more than 365 times in the Bible. The Word emphasizes that fear should not hold us back from living and loving as Jesus did. If Jesus worked so hard to get this message across, I want to listen.

“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” John 14:27

We can find hope and joy in knowing that the Lord walks beside us and will never leave us, no matter what comes. So let us choose to not live in fear, but to seize the opportunities that come every single day.

Examine your life

When you’re on an airplane, the flight attendant always warns you that in case of an emergency, you should secure your own oxygen mask before helping your neighbor with theirs. It’s easy to see the wisdom: how can you help someone else breathe when you have no air?

The same model is true within the Word. We must get our own hearts right with the Lord before we can effectively reach out to other people. This does

not mean we must be perfect before we have permission to act. No! This simply means that we should be actively pursuing God before we can ask the same of others.

Speak in Love

There was a time when I didn't often think about my family and friends facing judgment without the peace of heaven on the other side. Those thoughts were painful. It was easier to not think about it at all.

Yet we must. We must keep our eyes fixed on heaven and the future, and speak what we know to the ones around us.

The prophet Ezekiel received a warning from the Lord, "When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved." Ezekiel 33:8-9

Ultimately, another's decision to believe in and accept Jesus or not will be a personal choice they make. This is outside our control. Yet our willingness to speak the truth in love is in our control – and it is our responsibility as believers, as Watchmen and Watchwomen. We were given a blueprint for the days that are coming, and whether it comes to fruition within our lifetimes or not, we will be held accountable for sharing the knowledge we have been entrusted with.

Be Watchful

If we saw a car hurtling toward an unsuspecting person, we wouldn't hesitate to shout out a warning to save their life. Let us use our voices for life! Use your eyes to watch and your voice to bring hope to those around you. We don't know what tomorrow may bring, so we must live for today and with renewed purpose, hope and courage. Watch for opportunities to connect with those around you, and be brave when the time comes to share your faith.

I am a Watchwoman.

I am a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend.

I will not simply wait for the Lord to return, I will be active in my faith and live well in the days that I am given. We know what comes next. Let us choose not to be afraid, to live in hope and take advantage of the days we are given.

I am a Watchwoman, are you?

SECTION SEVEN
LINKS TO RESOURCES

RESOURCES

LINKS TO COMPLIMENTING VIDEO TEACHINGS

(These can also be found at [Vimeo.com/IAmAWatchman](https://www.vimeo.com/IAmAWatchman))

- ➔ Visit the [IAmAWatchman.com](https://www.iamawatchman.com) website to access numerous free, downloadable resources.
- ➔ Contact the I Am A Watchman team through the [IAmAWatchman.com](https://www.iamawatchman.com) contact portal to request information on the books and booklets noted on the back cover of this booklet.
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 1:** This video teaching provides a general overview of the wonder and structure of Bible Prophecy. The link is noted below: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxiAVPJFBVs&t=1s>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 2:** This video teaching profiles the precision of Bible Prophecy, and gives special consideration to an amazing set of prophecies found in Ezekiel 4. The link is noted below: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFePRv4TjJk>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 3:** This video teaching profiles the prophecies that have been fulfilled in the last 70 years, and notes what the recent concentration of fulfilled prophecies could indicate. The link to this teaching is noted here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HG5zSXHEiPI>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 4:** This video teaching profiles the Rapture and provides Scriptural support for the view that a Rapture will take place prior to the rise of the Antichrist and Tribulation period. The link is noted below: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wdkk2TK19Q>
- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 5:** This video teaching profiles the Antichrist and notes his nature, his goals, and the characteristics that will define his reign. The link is noted here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3alJnM-EVg>

APPENDIX

LINKS TO FOLLOW-UP VIDEO TEACHINGS

- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 6:** This video teaching profiles the Millennium and the Millennial Reign of Christ. The Millennium will follow the seven-year Tribulation period. During this time Christ will reign on earth, and the world will be restored to Eden-like conditions. The Millennium is referenced more than a thousand times in Scripture—this teaching presents an overview of the Who, What, Where, When and Why of this important coming event.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_keDDJ9EIY

- ➔ **Bible Prophecy Part 7:** This video teaching profiles the Psalm 83 War and what are likely to be among the next prophecies to be fulfilled in the prophetic time-line. The link is noted below:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZbL_dLvbyY&feature=youtu.be

- ➔ **What it means to be a Watchman:** This video teaching presents the biblical foundation for the term Watchman and the calling to be a Watchman. Drawing primarily from Ezekiel's 33, this teaching notes the particular heart, focus, and work of a Watchman. The I Am A Watchman ministry team believes that at this a crucial time in history, God is calling both men and women to serve as spiritual Watchmen. The link is noted below:
<https://vimeo.com/259965426>

- ➔ **How to be saved / The gift of salvation** This teaching video profiles the need to be saved, what God through Christ has done to make salvation possible, and what individuals must do to receive God's precious gift. God's greatest desire is that His people know Him and enter into relationship with Him. The link to this teaching is noted below:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWDalW0Bdio&t=5s>

ABOUT THE I AM A WATCHMAN MINISTRY

The I Am A Watchman ministry has been established to help individuals know the love of Jesus, enter into relationship with Jesus, live for Jesus, tell others about Jesus, and to prepare for the imminent return of Jesus. In informal language, the Watchman ministry strives to help individuals finish well (which is to live a life of meaning and purpose, and at the coming judgment hear the Lord say, “Well done my good and faithful servant”).

In more theological terms, the I Am A Watchman ministry’s focus is to help prepare the bride of Christ to meet the coming Bridegroom. This language comes from Matt. 25:1-46, Rev. 19:7-9, Rev. 21:2, John 14:1-3, and Rev. 21:9-11. The phrase is a word picture that imagines believers in Christ as the bride, who stand in readiness and purity, waiting for the Groom, who has promised to return, reward, and take his bride away.

The wise will strive to live well so they can finish well. The astute will strive to be aware of what God has done and what prophecy notes He will do in the days to come. In support of these goals, the I Am A Watchman ministry is happy to make available at no cost a wealth of discipleship, prophecy, and spiritual growth resources for those who desire to learn, and those who are called to lead. Please visit the www.IAmAWatchman.com website to access these resources.



About this author: Gary Ray is a student of the Word. He has served in pastoral ministry with his wife Tina for 30 years. He currently serves as President of the *I Am A Watchman* ministry.

Gary is a lifelong learner. He has received and shares the grace of God, and enjoys speaking and writing about what God has done and what He is going to do.

About this booklet: To serve as a pastor is an honorable and lofty calling. According to Scripture, pastors receive a special call from God and anointing from the Spirit to preach God's Word, teach God's people, and lead in mobilizing believers to effectively carry-out the 'Great Commission.' It is a holy calling, and surely unimaginable reward awaits faithful servants. However, though the reward for God's shepherds can be great, so are the expectations.

Pastors are responsible for sharing the entire counsel of God—teaching from every book and pertinent passage of Scripture. Pastors are charged to inform and equip the church—the bride of Christ. Unfortunately, though almost one third of the Bible pertains to prophecy or eschatology, many pastors rarely boldly teach on these subjects. Believers are hungry for the word and need to be aware of, and prepared for, what is to come. The great preacher, scholar, and writer AW Tozier wrote: "It is a solemn thing, and no small scandal in the Kingdom, to see God's children starving while seated at the Father's table."

Pastors are God's chosen servants. They have the privilege and burden to share God's wisdom, and preach of His promises and His warnings. I urge those who teach and preach to echo Paul's request for intercessory prayer: "*Pray that I may boldly make known the mysteries of the Gospel.*" (Ephesians 6:19).

May the material in this booklet inspire and equip servants of the Lord.

