

# Living Hope for the End of Days— Walking Each Day with THE GOD You Can Know and Trust

As you open with me to Joshua 1:8-9, may I remind all of you who already know this, and introduce any of you who do not—to the God whom we can know and trust through His Word.

The chief way that God has revealed Himself is through His Word.

## God Has Shared His Plan

The Bible you hold in your hands, and have backed up in the memory/storage spaces of your mind, is the Plan of God for your life; God's Word is single most valuable commodity that you can hold.

This Book holds the only key, to making the right decisions about:

- How to **know** God's choice for a mate, and for your career;
- How to **care** for an aging parent;
- How to **respond** to a rebelling child;
- How to **rebuild** a strained or broken marriage;
- How to **proceed** when in a dead-end job;
- How to **recover** when in a hopeless financial mess;
- How to **react** to a bad medical diagnosis; and
- How to **survive**, and go on, through aching loneliness.

Those are just the start, to the endless supply of perfect answers and directions that God's Word holds for each of us who will seek Him and find His directions for our lives.

So that leads me to this declaration:

All that I know, believe, and confidently hold to about God and His Plan for my life, my world, my marriage, my family, and my future--is in this absolutely trustworthy Bible. I believe God's Word, I study God's Word, and I declare God's Word through preaching and teaching.

And so, my goal for each of you is that in the days ahead you will believe God's Word so completely, that it will become part of those strongest habits of your life.

My constant prayer is that each of us wake to thinking the Word, and when we get a quiet moment in a hectic day that our thoughts drift to God's Word, and when we finally get to unwind and relax, that restful time would also involve a renewing dip into the life-giving waters of God's Word.

And finally, I long that all of this develops a default setting in our lives, that is keyed to the Word; and that each of us will learn the spiritual discipline:

- **of going to the Word** to start the day,
- **of turning to the Word** to relax our mind when stressed,
- **of trusting the Word** to encourage our heart when troubled,
- **of inviting the Word** to guide our life when confused, and
- **of allowing the Word** to assure our souls when in doubt.

One of the many places where God invites us to this lifestyle of Word-Filled Living is in Joshua 1:8-9. Please stand with me as we listen to God speak through His Word.

### **Pray**

In the coming weeks as we closely study the seven reasons why I trust God's Word. These are the reasons I seek to keep my mind filled with God's Word, the absolutely trustworthy record of God's voice.

When I open this Book and read, I hear God speak. When we stood a moment ago and I read and you listened—we all actually heard God speak. That is the level at which we are to hold the Bible.

The first reason I am convinced of God's Word, is that **God tells us exactly what He is going to do in the future, long before He does it.** That act of God, declaring in minute, clear, and amazing detail the events of the future is called *Biblical Prophecy*.

Perhaps no other branch of theology is more fascinating than Biblical Prophecy (which is also called Eschatology)--"God describing exactly what He will do in the Future".

## **God Describes The Future**

In just the past month more world events have lined up into the Biblical sequence laid down by God over 2600 years ago—than at any other time in my prophetic-news-watching-life. What do I mean? I mean that the world is unfolding before us, by way of the daily news—exactly as God told us it would?

What impact should a study of Biblical prophecy have upon us? Simply this: prophecy was given by God to us so that we would trust Him. Our God knows the future, our God plans each detail, and He tells us about the future so we will trust Him to hold our hands through life, guiding and keeping us!

There was a four-letter-word I that repeatedly captured my spiritual attention in the news reports this month. That word is very big on the radar screen of God's plans for the future. What is that four-letter word that we all should notice when it pops up in the news? **I-R-A-N.**

A series of events surrounding Iran, described in detail 2,600 years ago by God, has been murky, fuzzy and out of focus for all of those centuries until recently. Let me just briefly point out what God says.

Listen to just these headlines:

- ***Iran threatens to Exterminate/Annihilate Israel*** (continuously since Friday, October 28, 2005)
- ***Israel Conducts Massive War Games:*** (Saturday, June 21, 2008) In the latest sign of escalating tension over Tehran's alleged nuclear program, Israel held a massive military exercise this month that involved more than 100 Israeli warplanes -- including F-15s and F-16s, refueling tankers and helicopters for pilot rescue.
- ***Russia invades and occupies Georgia*** (August 8, 2008)
- ***US agrees to base troops in Israel for the first time in history*** (August 18, 2008): As a part of the X-Band Radar, missile defense system.
- ***Syria seeks to host Russian missiles in its territory*** - Jerusalem Post: Syrian President Bashar Assad has pledged to support Russia in its conflict with Georgia and said that Damascus was ready to consider deploying Russian missile systems in its territory. (August 22, 2008)
- ***Russia threatens sale of offensive weapons to Israel's enemies - Fear of new Mid East 'Cold War' as Syria strengthens military alliance with Russia*** - London Times: Syria raised the prospect yesterday of having Russian missiles on its soil, sparking fears of a new Cold War in the Middle East. President Assad said as he arrived in Moscow to clinch a series of military agreements: "We are ready to co-operate with Russia in any project that can strengthen its security." (August 22, 2008)
- ***Israel and Iran: the Armageddon scenario:*** -The Ottawa Citizen (Saturday, August 23, 2008): It is becoming increasingly likely that Israel will attack Iran's nuclear facilities in the next few months. While much of the recent media commentary has revolved around the question of whether Israel has the military capability to undertake such a difficult mission, this emphasis misses the larger point, which is that an Israeli strike may set off a chain reaction that could prove difficult to control. Assuming that the Israeli Air Force attacks -- regardless of whether or not the raid is successful -- the Iranian response will be the key to

determining how serious the crisis becomes... uncertainty involves the type of warhead Iran would arm its missiles with. Would they be conventionally armed, in which case the number of Israeli casualties would depend on the targets hit (as discussed above)? Or would they be armed with a chemical or biological agent, in which case Israeli casualties could be massive? Once again, Israel's retaliation would likely follow the Iranian lead, with the latter scenario resulting in a major nuclear counter-strike. In sum, an Israeli strike against Iran now appears almost inevitable. The effects of this strike are impossible to predict, but it is not difficult to imagine a scenario where the results could be devastating.

- ***America, France, and Britain form the largest peace-time naval armada in history, during August, in waters around the Middle East*** –Debka (Saturday August 23, 2008) There are six carrier groups now stationed around the Gulf, that is half of America's projectable military power concentrated in one area.

All that we have as believers is tied to God's Word. We come to faith by the Word, we know God through His Word, and we are filled by the Spirit through His Word, and so on.

Trusting God's Word is especially relevant to days in which we live. God wants hope-filled men and women walking through life side-by-side with hope-less worldlings, so that we can point those without hope to our hope in Christ.

## **Living Hope or Panic Attacks**

In one of Christ's final messages, He tells us that the time period ahead of us called the end of days, is going to be so "hope-less"—that people actually will drop dead from heart failure as they see what is coming.

He then goes on to say that His children are to be different. Jesus wants you and me to be filled with hope.

So, as the foundation for all we do at Calvary, we need to all reaffirm the Book we trust, the Bible we believe, and The Word that alone has the power to change our lives. There are no less than seven reasons we can all hold to, for why we know God's Word is true. The reliable Word of God is the anchor for our lives through life's storms, and for our minds through all of Satan's attacks.

Open with me to Jesus describing the End of Days in Luke 21; this is Christ's thumbnail or short version of the 22 chapters of the final book of the Bible called the book of the Revelation. There are fearful times coming to this planet. Listen to Jesus speak:

*Luke 21:25-27 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 "men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. 27 "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 "Now when these things begin to happen, **look up and lift up your heads**, because your redemption draws near."*

Jesus says that we are headed toward the end of days when people "expire". The word translated 'failing' (NKJV) is **aposucho** which means that a person's 'breath pops out' or 'expires' because of complete fear. We often see that in earthquakes, fires, and hurricanes that many deaths come among the elderly with heart attacks.

But the end of days will see the ultimate panic attack coming; and many healthy humans will just expire for fear. Jesus only briefly described those days in the Gospels; the final word is the last book of the Bible.

The Book of Revelation is God's final word to mankind; it is also the most powerful book of the Bible. Nearly twenty years ago I began writing a book about living hope based on Biblical prophecy because I believed that the last book of the Bible is the most hope filled, hope inspiring, hope anchoring book in all of God's Word.

## **Prophecy: God's Signature Across History**

Each of us who are believers, saved, and members of Christ's family, needs *Living Hope for the End of Days*. We need to learn how to walk each day—with the God we can know personally and trust completely.

One of the most powerful truths to strengthen and guide you through life is found in **Jeremiah 1:12**.

The Creator and Redeemer, the Lord God Almighty who is the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe tells us that there is something He is very focused upon.

The Book you hold in your hands this evening, the Bible God's Word, is like none other—because God says, "I am watching over my Word—to perform it!" That is what I like to call the signature of God.

## **Prophecy: The Test To Show Who Is God**

Perhaps the greatest way that you and I can affirm the reality of God today is through Biblical Prophecy. The Scriptures are unique in that God has mapped out specific events in the future. Only the Living and True God of Heaven and Earth has ever dared to say, **"Let me tell you the future"**.

In fact, He said that was the way you could know that He was real, and that you and I could place our faith and trust in Him.

God declares the future in His Word because He "watches over His Word to perform it!"

⇒ Jeremiah 1:12 Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to perform My word." NKJV

⇒ Jeremiah 1:12 The LORD said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled." NIV

⇒ Jeremiah 1:12 Then the Lord said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it." NASB

What is the simplest and yet most profound evidence the Bible offers concerning God's reality?

It is prophecy fulfilled--the irrefutable verification reserved to the Scriptures alone.

Prophecy is the missing element in all other sacred scriptures of the world's religions; it is not to be found in the Koran, the Hindu Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Book of Mormon, the sayings of Buddha, the writings of Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science).

By contrast prophecy comprises more than 25% of the Scriptures! And the vast majority all of prophecy centers on the nation of Israel. God has said that if we watch Israel we will see what He is going to do in the future

God has left His signature, the proof that He is who He claims to be—in the form of prophecies (God explaining future events in clear details that can be verified). So the huge amount of prophetic verses in our Bible is a strong and comforting place to encourage our trusting God. Only the One and Only True God can predict the future with absolute accuracy! As we begin open with me to Isaiah 41:21:

"Present your case," says the LORD. "Bring forth your strong [reasons,]" says the King of Jacob. (NKJV)

Only the One and Only True God can predict the future with absolute accuracy!

## **1. ONLY TRUST THE BOOK FROM: THE ONE WHO ACCURATELY KNOWS THE FUTURE.**

Isaiah 41:23 **Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods;** Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together.

**2. ONLY TRUST THE BOOK FROM: THE ONE PROPHECY PROVES IS THE REAL GOD.**

Isaiah 42:5-9 Thus says God the Lord, **Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it:** 6 "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, **And will hold Your hand;** I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, 7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison, Those who sit in darkness from the prison house. 8 **I am the Lord, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another,** Nor My praise to carved images. 9 Behold, the former things have come to pass, And new things I declare; **Before they spring forth I tell you of them."**

**3. ONLY TRUST THE BOOK FROM: THE ONE PROPHECY PROVES IS THE RELIABLE GOD.**

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 **Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done,** Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'

**4. ONLY TRUST THE BOOK FROM: THE ONE PROPHECY PROVES IS THE GOD WE CAN TRUST.**

Isaiah 48:3-5 "**I have declared the former things from the beginning;** They went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. 5 **Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you,** Lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, And my carved image and my molded image Have commanded them.'

**5. ONLY TRUST THE BOOK FROM: THE ONE WHO DETERMINES OUR ETERNAL DESTINY.**

Isaiah 48:17-18, 22 Thus says the Lord, **your Redeemer,** The Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, Who teaches you to profit, **Who leads you by the way you should go.** 18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! **Then your peace would have been like a river, And**

***your righteousness like the waves of the sea.*** 22 *"There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked."*

And that is why that four-letter-word repeatedly captured my spiritual attention in the news reports this month.

Be sure you know and trust the God who holds your destiny—and be sure you let Him hold your hand!



## Appendix: My Reflections on a New Pastorate

This morning, as our family joins you the saints at CBC, and I become the grateful, 10<sup>th</sup> pastor of Calvary, I come as a part of Christ's plan for His church.

Ephesians 4 tells each of us that God places men as pastors in His Church; and above all of our plans, decisions, and efforts towers the Omnipotent, Sovereign of the Universe—to whom we all bow, seeking to obey and serve Him all our days.

Just to start together in our journey together as pastor and people, and so that all of us are on the same page, let me briefly remind you of:

My Spiritual Pedigree, I was:

- Called by God to Salvation in 1962;
- Surrendered to God, as a Servant for Life in 1965;
- Led by God to the Gospel Ministry in 1975;
- Enabled by God to serve as a pastor since 1977.

My Personal Handicaps (as a reminder to every member of CBC) are that:

- I am a saved, justified, and forgiven sinner; and
- I am a Saint enrolled by God in His life-long program called sanctification;
- I am a servant who seeks daily, as well as moment-by moment, to stay surrendered to the Lordship of Christ over every area of my life; but from where you sit, for as long as the Lord enables and gives me the joyful privilege of serving you, always remember that like you:
  1. I am a very imperfect person, but called to be a husband, a father, and a pastor—energized by God's grace;
  2. I fail every day, and every hour, and even many moments, in being all that I know I am to be for Christ, and want to be for Him;
  3. I am painfully aware of many of my many sins, abundant weaknesses, innumerable imperfections, failures, and limitations;
  4. I am also often reminded that for any sins or weaknesses I may have overlooked God has given me a wife, children, and godly brothers to lovingly come close and point out what was wrong in my life, painful as it may be at times—as part of God's sanctification plan; but most of all:
  5. I am joyfully aware that **God's grace is sufficient for me**, and that **His strength is made perfect in my weakness**, and that **I want Him to increase, and me to decrease**, more and more, each day He gives me to live!