

Some Successes, Many Failures

Would you like to know your future? The notion appeals to many. There are a lot of people who predict upcoming events—with varying results. Consider the following:

SCIENTISTS utilize sophisticated equipment and vast amounts of money to forecast various matters, such as how pollution will eventually affect the earth and whether it will rain in your neighborhood tomorrow.

PROFESSIONAL ANALYSTS predict trends in business and politics. Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest people in the world, has been dubbed an oracle for his successful business investments. Nate Silver, another analyst, has interpreted statistics to help him make predictions about everything from U.S. politics to Hollywood film awards.

ANCIENT SOURCES have been interpreted as prophecies. Some people see modern-day fulfillment in the vague writings of 16th-century Michel de Notredame (Nostradamus). A Mayan calendar cycle that ended on December 21, 2012, was interpreted by some as a portent of cataclysmic events.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS sometimes predict tragic worldwide events to warn mankind and gather followers. Doomsday prophet Harold Camping and his disciples widely advertised that the earth would be destroyed in 2011. Needless to say, the world is still here.

PSYCHICS claim to have special abilities to predict the future. Edgar Cayce and Jeane Dixon both made some accurate predictions about 20th-century events. Each also uttered many failed predictions. For instance, Dixon foretold the outbreak of a World War III in 1958, and Cayce predicted that New York would slide into the ocean in the mid-1970's.

Is there really any reliable way to see the future? The question is worth asking. If you were able to preview upcoming events, life could be very different for you.





Can Anyone See the Future?

We all think about the future. We wonder what life will be like for ourselves and our loved ones. We ask such questions as these: ‘Will my children live in a better world? Will the earth be destroyed in a disaster? Is there something I can change now to make my future better?’ This curiosity is part of who we are; we naturally yearn for reassurance, certainty, order, and stability. If you could be more certain about the future, you could prepare for it, both physically and emotionally.

So, what is in your future? Can anyone know? Professionals who try to predict the future have met with some successes but also many failures. Yet, it is said that God can accurately foretell upcoming events. His Word says: “From the beginning I foretell the outcome, and from long ago the things that have not yet been done.” (Isaiah 46:10) How successful has he been?

GOD’S SUCCESS RATE

Why should you be interested in the success rate of God’s ancient prophecies? Well, if you found a weather forecaster to be accurate every day for a long time, you would be impressed. Likely you would pay attention to what he said

about the weather tomorrow. In a similar way, if you were to learn that God has foretold events with a perfect rate of success, you would surely be interested in what he foretells about your future.

THE DESTRUCTION OF A GREAT CITY: For example, it would really be a remarkable feat to predict accurately that a great city, powerful for many centuries, would soon collapse. Through one of his spokesmen, God foretold just such a thing—the desolation of Nineveh. (Zephaniah 2:13-15) What have secular historians recorded? In the



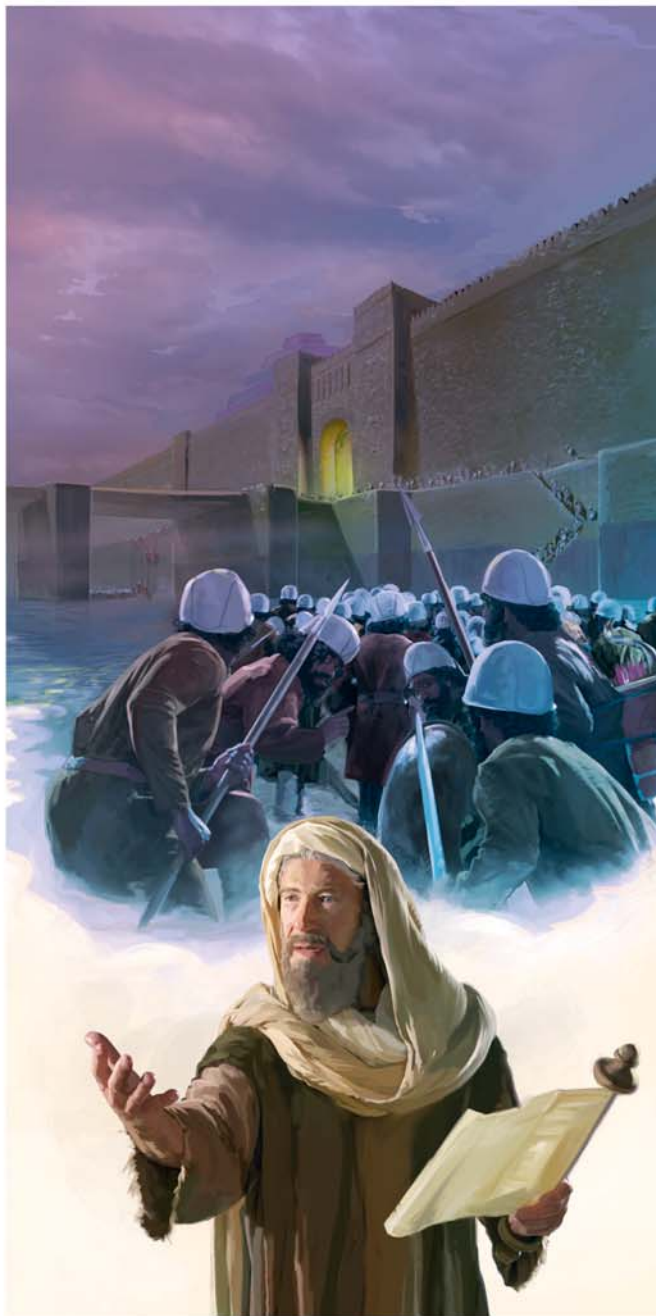
A rebuilt wall in the ruins of ancient Nineveh

Randy Olson/National Geographic Creative

seventh century B.C.E., evidently some 15 years after God made his prediction, the Babylonians and the Medes attacked and overthrew Nineveh. Additionally, God specified in advance that Nineveh would be made “desolate, as dry as a desert.” Did this advance notice prove to be accurate? Yes. Although the city and its suburbs may have covered some 200 square miles (518 sq km), the conquerors did not preserve and make use of the city, as might be expected. Instead, they destroyed it. Could any political analyst have predicted those events with such accuracy?

HUMAN BONES WILL BURN: Who would be so daring as to announce—300 years in advance—the exact name and specific ancestry of a man who would burn human bones on an altar, as well as the name of the town where the altar would be located? If such an unusual prediction came true, it would surely make the forecaster famous. God’s spokesman announced: “A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David . . . , and he will burn human bones” on an altar in the town of Bethel. (1 Kings 13:1, 2) About three centuries later, a king named Josiah—not a common Biblical name—came from the family lineage of David. Exactly as foretold, Josiah had “bones taken from the graves and burned them on the altar” located in Bethel. (2 Kings 23:14-16) How could anyone foretell such specific details unless guided by a super-human source?

THE END OF AN EMPIRE: It would be amazing if a person could successfully predict the name of a man—long before his birth—who would organize the overthrow of a major world power, even indicating the unusual strategy that he would employ. God announced that a man named Cyrus would launch the conquest of a nation. This Cyrus would also free Jewish captives and support the reconstruction of their holy temple. Additionally, God foretold that Cyrus’ battle strategy would include the drying up of rivers and indicated that gates would be left open, facilitating the



Bible prophets foretold the fall of Babylon with amazing accuracy

Examining Bible prophecies teaches us something interesting about God's personality. God notifies us of his will, showing us that he is not apathetic or coldly uninterested in mankind. Rather, he is actively concerned about our future. In fact, he wants us to live to see a bright future.

conquest. (Isaiah 44:27–45:2) Were the many details of God's prophecy fulfilled accurately? Historians agree that this conquest by Cyrus actually occurred. Cyrus' army employed the tremendous engineering feat of diverting one of Babylon's waterways—in effect, drying up rivers. What is more, the army entered the city through gates that had been left open. Cyrus thereafter freed the Jewish people and declared that they could rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. That was unusual, for Cyrus did not worship the God of the Jews. (Ezra 1:1-3) Who but God could have predicted the details of those historical events?

We have mentioned three examples showing how God successfully foretold future events. These are not isolated incidents. The Jewish leader Joshua stated a fact that was well-known to his large audience: "You well know with all your heart and with all your soul that not one word out of all the good promises that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed." (Joshua 23:1, 2, 14) Joshua's people could not deny the success rate of God's promises and prophecies. But how does God do it? There are major differences between God's ways and man's. This is important for you to know, for God has made some epic announcements about the near future that will definitely affect you.

GOD'S PROPHECIES VERSUS HUMAN PREDICTIONS

Human predictions are often based on such factors as scientific research, analysis of available facts and trends, or even bogus spiritual insight. After making their forecasts, humans typically sit back passively and wait to see what will happen. —Proverbs 27:1.

In contrast to humans, God knows all the facts. He thoroughly understands the nature and inclination of humans; therefore, when he chooses to do so, God can foresee exactly how individu-

als and entire nations will act. But God can do more than that. He can even control and change factors and trends to ensure the outcome. He says: "My word that goes out of my mouth . . . will not return to me without results, . . . and it will have sure success." (Isaiah 55:11) In a way, then, some of God's predictions are more like announcements or declarations. He actively guarantees a perfect record of success.

YOUR FUTURE

Is there a reliable forecast involving your future and that of your loved ones? If you have advance knowledge of an approaching hurricane, you can take lifesaving action. You can respond similarly to Bible prophecy. God has announced that huge worldwide changes will come soon. (See the box "What God Has Revealed About the Future.") This future is quite different from what many so-called experts forecast.

You might think of it this way: The story of this world has an overall plot. It has already been written, and you can preview the finale. God declares: "From the beginning I foretell the outcome, . . . I say, 'My decision will stand, and I will do whatever I please.'" (Isaiah 46:10) You and your family can have a wonderful future. Ask Jehovah's Witnesses about what the Bible says regarding upcoming events. The Witnesses are not psychics; nor do they claim to hear spirit voices or to have any special powers of prediction. They are students of the Bible who can show you the good things that God is actively arranging for your future. ■



What God Has Revealed About the Future

- Contrary to what doomsday prophets say, God assures us that our planet Earth will never be destroyed.—Psalm 104:5; Ecclesiastes 1:4.
- Humans will be in the process of ruining the earth when God steps in and stops them.—Psalm 92:7; Revelation 11:18.
- God is aware that the majority of religions have slandered him and ignored the Bible, and he will destroy those institutions.—Revelation 18:4-9.
- God's heavenly government—not any humans or forces on earth—will destroy all wicked, disobedient people. “The future of wicked people will be cut off.”—Psalm 37: 10, 38; Daniel 2:44.
- God will preserve individuals whom he approves, and they will flourish on a beautiful earth. “Take note of the blameless one, and keep the upright one in sight, for the future of that man will be peaceful.”—Psalm 37:11, 37; Revelation 21:3, 4.
- God kindly explains in the Bible how you may gain his approval and how “you may succeed in escaping all these things that must occur.”—Luke 21:36; John 17:3.