

New Testament

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A N L I
Bridging The Gap Leadership

Reading 1

Revelation and How It Relates to Prophecy

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Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, prophecy exists as a means of God's communication of future events and revelation of Himself to humanity. In other words, from the beginning of recorded humanity and after the glorification of Jesus, God inspired various authors of Scripture to boldly proclaim or write prophecies throughout human experience to foretell future events. God provides both natural revelation and spiritual revelation for those seeking a better understanding of prophecy. Natural revelation helps most Christian believers and non-followers of the Lord understand basic concepts about God such as the existence of an omnipotent Creator, life with design, and natural law. However, some messages in prophecy require special or spiritual revelation for divinely inspired insight and knowledge in order for the understanding to be revealed. God gives special revelation to Spirit-filled believers to identify Old Testament prophecies about Jesus' life, including His miraculous birth and earthly ministry. The New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies prove Jesus manifested God's plan of redemption for humanity.

Revelation: Meaning and Types

Revelation derives from the Greek word ἀποκαλύπτω, transliterated as *apokalyptō* and means an uncovering (Vine, 1996). God's divine revelation unveils something previously hidden in Scripture. Specifically, it discloses the previously unknown (Elwell, 2001). Further, God discloses to humanity that which He chooses to communicate and reveal about Himself. The exchange between Peter and Jesus exemplifies this. Jesus had questioned Peter about His own identity (Matt 16:15 KJV). When Peter responded Jesus was the "Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:15), Jesus told Peter "flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto him, but the Father which is in heaven" (v. 17). God providentially uncovered truth according to His will, purpose, and timing (Martin, 1964).

How did God reveal the previously hidden? He used multiple means in which He progressively revealed His divine salvation plan from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The inspired authors of Scripture presented God's revealed communication in the biblical canon through agents (prophets), witness (Incarnation), redemptive events (birth, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ), signs, miracles, and wonders (Jesus raised

Lazarus from the dead and cast out unclean spirits from many who demon possessed). Knight and Ray (2012) expanded this further noting God revealed Himself by making personal appearances; manifesting Himself in the form of a human being or an angel; appearing in a cloud, fire, or bright light; or using phenomenon from nature and the universe. Further, He appeared in visions and dreams. God did not limit His manner of revelatory communication.

The various means of revelatory communication can be categorized into two types, natural and spiritual revelation. Both forms of revelation point towards the fact there is a God full of wisdom, power, order, and majesty. However, natural revelation comes short of revealing the redemptive work of Christ.

Revelation: Natural Understanding

Some philosophers and historians categorize atheism as the rejection of a belief in the existence of God (Wikipedia, 2014). If a believer would share the goodness of God and belief in Christ with an atheist, questions may surface such as “If you say that God is good, why did my mother die at a young age, or why is there so much evil in the world?” Could these questions actually reveal an inner struggle with God's nature, rather than His existence? The Bible explains that by observing the natural world, God has instilled in every man a knowledge He exists. However, some have become vain in their imaginations and have had their foolish hearts darkened. In Rom 1:19-21, Paul declared to the Roman church

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.

God has placed in us all an intuitive knowledge that He is the supreme and all knowledgeable God. Some have chosen to reject this knowledge of God and to embrace an unthankful spirit. Being unthankful goes against the spirit of humility and is a sign that self is exalted above God. Instead of retaining God in their knowledge, these individuals have chosen to allow their minds to ponder on wicked and idolatrous imaginations. This leads to a person having a hardened heart against the truth. God has given everyone a freedom of choice. If a person continues to persist in this rebellion against the truth and conviction of God, according to Rom 1:24, he will give that person up to his own heart's lust (Wommack, 1995).

Unfortunately, even after some people receive a natural revelation and accept that creation speaks of the deity of God and His power, they still worship the “universe” instead of the Savior. Yet, all revelation, both spiritual and natural, comes from God. But His set apart people have spiritual revelation from His Spirit's infilling that reveals all truth previously hidden in Scripture. Nevertheless, God's elect people yearn to obtain the spiritual revelation. This occurs as a result of the Spirit's infilling.

Spiritual Revelation: Prophecy's Language of Redemption

Spiritual revelation (or special revelation) emanates through prophecy. Prophecy derives from the Greek transliteration *propheteia*, which means to speak forth the mind and counsel of God (Vine, 1996). The Old Testament provides many scriptures that foretell Jesus' deity and first coming. Several Old Testament books, such as Genesis, Isaiah, Psalms, and Zachariah, include prophecies about the events of Jesus' earthly life and ministry. The New Testament contains numerous prophecies coming to pass, spoken hundreds of years before the advent of Jesus, during Jesus' earthly reign.

For instance, the Prophet Isaiah declared, “Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa 7:14). According to this particular Old Testament scripture, Isaiah clearly prophesied the birth of the Messiah one sees fulfilled in the New Testament in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit impregnated (came upon) Mary, a virgin (Luke 1:35), which is the first messianic fulfillment sign. Quoting Isa 7:14, Matthew gave his account of the miracle birth with the statement “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt 1:23). The name Immanuel/Emmanuel has significance. For through salvation and relationship with the Lord, God always remains with us. When His people call on the name Jesus, He redeems us from every trouble, sickness, and worry.

Additionally, Isaiah prophetically proclaimed God would progressively reveal Himself as Jesus (the Savior) in “behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isa 35:4b-6c). Further, Jesus fulfilled this Old Testament prophecy through His earthly ministry in Luke 7. After ministering to a group of people, including some of John the Baptist's disciples, Jesus told them “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead

are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall be not be offended in me” (7:22b-23).

A third Old Testament prophecy about the future coming of Jesus is in Genesis, which chronicles the beginning of humanity. After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and attempted to hide from God, He disclosed His plan of redemption for humanity directly to the serpent, which of course, symbolized the devil. Approximately 2,500 years later, during the time of Moses, God revealed the story of Adam and Eve (the beginning of mankind), their initial innocence, their being tricked by the serpent, their consequential disfellowship with God, and His plan of redemption for humanity. As such, under divine inspiration, Moses wrote the Words of God “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Gen 3:15). Paul’s letter to the churches of Galatia fulfills Gen 3:15 with “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal 4:4). God Himself entered the world through the womb of Mary and the miracle birth of Jesus to redeem humanity from its sins.

Conclusion

God's infinite wisdom, mercy, grace, and love provided everyone with an opportunity to experience natural revelation so they know of His existence. However, in order to walk in fellowship with Him, one must take it a step further and receive His spiritual revelation. Spiritual revelation allows a person to understand and receive the many prophetic messages that speak of Christ's redemptive work and how it ties in together to unveil His majestic plan. When Christ followers think of how God masterfully orchestrated natural and spiritual revelations to achieve His purpose for redemption through Jesus, it humbles His beloved people. Psalm 8:3-4 beautifully depicts God's grand plan as King David declared, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou are mindful of him?; and the son of man that thou visitest him?" All in all, the God of all creation made it possible for humanity to know Him through both natural and spiritual revelation. Of these two types of revelation, any human being has access to natural while only Spirit-filled believers have spiritual. From an intimate relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, He reveals Himself and prophecies about Jesus to spiritually-minded people who desire to maintain fellowship and communion with the Lord and grow in the knowledge and understanding of the Bible.

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Reading 2

Understanding Prophecy

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The Old and New Testaments epitomize Jesus Christ as prophecy's centralized theme. The apostles did not have the New Testament as a source to teach about Jesus during the early church's formation. Instead, they used Hebrew Scripture that foretold of the coming Messiah to support their eye-witness accounts about His life, death, and resurrection. What does prophecy mean? Scripture explained God's Spirit moved the Old Testament prophets to foretell Christ's kingdom and its triumph (2 Pet 1:21; Thayer, 2009). Therefore, prophecy originates from God who inspired the prophets to convey it as His messengers. Thayer (2009) defined *prophecy* (Greek transliterated as *prophēteia*) as a divinely inspired communication declaring God's purposes for future events. Thus, prophecy not only originates from God, but also suits His purposes.

The redemptive language relates the nature of salvation from covenant to covenant. At the Hebrew Scripture's core, it contains messianic prophecy (Segraves, 2008). The New Covenant fulfills the messianic prophecies from the Old. How can today's believer understand Christ in prophecy? By carefully examining prophecies with the Holy Spirit's illumination, one can interpret God's progressive revelation of the Messiah. This article presents the framework for understanding Christ in prophecy by providing the meaning of fulfill and foretell as well as basic explanations and examples of the three types of prophecy--Direct, typological, and symbolic.

Fulfillment in Prophecy

The word *fulfill*, (Greek: πληρώω; *plēroō*) appears "twelve times in Matt, two in Mark, four in Luke, eight in John, two in Acts" (Blue Letter Bible, 2014, para. 1). Thayer's Lexicon defines prophecy's biblical meaning as "sayings, promises, prophecies of the Lord to bring to pass, ratify, or accomplish" (e.g., Matt 1:22; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:44 (Thayer, 2009, p. 517)). The lexicon also gives another meaning, "universally and absolutely to fulfil, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets)

to receive fulfillment" (See Matt 5:17; Figure 1). Prophecies of Jesus' first coming already occurred, while those of His second coming have not been fulfilled yet. Two New Testament key passages give insight to fulfillment's meaning, Matt 5:17 and Luke 24:44. Jesus revealed God's divine will for Israel in the former, while He projected His fulfillment as necessary to establishing His Church for all nations in the latter. Both verses showed believers in Christ must accept, obey, and follow Him in faith as the fulfilled Messiah.

Based on internal evidence from the Book of Matthew, many theologians argued the Gospel author wrote to a predominantly Jewish Christian audience (Beale & Carson, 2007; Harrington, 2007). Blomberg supported this argument reasoning Matthew used a high amount of Hebrew scripture.–This Gospel author quoted 55 Old Testament scriptures in Matthew, as opposed to the three other authors who quoted 65 in their combined three books (Cited in Beale & Carson, 2007). He also explained of the 55 direct quotations from the Old Testament, 25 remain exclusive to Matthew and 12 refer to fulfilled Scripture. Further, the Gospel author Matthew did not explain his quotations suggesting a Jewish audience would have had the background to understand. Also, consider Matthew wrote his gospel after the second temple's destruction in 70 A.D. during a conflict when Jews tried to define their own identity. With a high emphasis on Jewish text, Matthew may have sought to counter their beliefs and convince them of Jesus' fulfillment as the Messiah. These occurrences came on the heels of Matt 5:17. Prior to this this passage, the Gospel author heralded in the idea of fulfillment with five other Hebrew quotes, beginning each an opening like "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying" (Matt 1:22):

- "Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt 1:23; cf. Isa 7:14);
- "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel" (Matt 2:6; cf. Gen 49:10);
- "Out of Egypt, have I called my son" (Matt 2:15c; cf. Hos 11:1);

- "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentations, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not" (Matt 2:19; cf. Jer 31:15);
- "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt 3:3; cf. Mal 3:1); and
- "The land of Zabulon, and the Land of Nephthalim by the way of the sea; beyond Jordan Galilee of Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is spring up" (Matt 4:15-16; cf. Isa 9:1-2).

Matthew repeatedly used Old Testament quotations (Matt 1:23; 2:6, 15, 19; 3:3; and 4:15-16) to support Jesus as the fulfilled Jewish Messiah directed at the original audience of this text. As the author continues, he reinforces Jesus' fulfillment again with a quote from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught this sermon at Galilee to His disciples and a large crowd who had followed Him throughout this region (Matt 4:23-25). Jesus ended His teachings focused on fulfillment, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (5:17 KJV). What significance does this verse hold? Jesus did not come to undo or eliminate the law of Moses and teachings of the prophets, rather to complete God's promises and make them come to pass. He also stressed an even greater revelation about His fulfillment. The audience should obey and follow God's will for them because His fulfillment was universal and absolute as the law's Authoritative Interpreter (vv. 19-20). What astonishing revelations!

Fulfillment also acknowledged the completion of events that led to the carrying out of His commission to take the Gospel to the nations (Luke 24:44-48). Jesus taught His disciples on the importance of fulfillment just prior to His ascension: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44 KJV). All Scriptures had to be fulfilled to bring salvation in its fullness to all people. The next verse (v. 24:46) tells how Jesus thoroughly opened the disciples mind to reveal its meaning: The Messiah would suffer and rise from the

dead on the third day. Then, Jesus in the next verse explained the prophecy's significance (v. 46). That is beginning in Jerusalem, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations. As witnesses of these foretold events, the disciples would complete its commission. Thus, in order for the disciples to carry out the commission, they first had to understand and accept the fulfillment of this prophecy in faith. Then, they lived it out by going to Jerusalem and remaining there for the Father's promised Spirit, "until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

After Peter healed the lame man at the gates called Beautiful, the apostle told an already amazed audience, "Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days" (Acts 3:24 NKJV). The Old Testament prophets held the role of "covenant enforcement mediators who delivered God's Word" (Paron, 2014). God used these prophets to communicate His will, namely, to tell the future regarding Israel, the nations, and the first and second comings of the Messiah. They communicated God's messianic message through symbols, types, and direct prophecies that foretold the coming Messiah, which Christ literally and completely fulfilled. Thus, Jesus fulfilled all messianic prophecy recorded in Scripture with absolute accuracy and authority in every detail.

Interpretation of Prophecy

Scripture-interprets-Scripture for a harmonious, united message that narrates God's Big Story. Students of the Word interpret prophecy via the grammatical-historical approach by exegeting prophetic passages in their historic and literary context for a literal meaning. This approach brings literal meaning out from the text, but never adds to it. *Exegesis* answers the question, What did the biblical author mean? The *historical aspect* seeks to answer this question by examining words and expressions according to their intended meaning at the time written. In doing so, it considers prevailing biblical geographical, social, political, archeological, political, cultural, philosophical, and religious views and/or events (Bernard, 2005). The *grammatical aspect* of this interpretation approach looks to words, grammatical forms, and relationships for meaning.

Under the umbrella of the historical-grammatical approach of exegeting Scripture, the interpreter looks to direct, typological, and symbolic features of prophecy to find literal meaning. All three concern themselves with literal fulfillment of prophecy. The revelation from the Holy Spirit illuminates understanding during interpretation with these three features, but God's Spirit will not contradict His own Word.

Direct (New Testament Use of the Old Testament)

The New Testament authors used Old Testament material for various reasons, among them literal fulfillment of prophecy. Their quotes came from Jesus' direct instruction, the apostles' witness of Him, and the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Jesus Himself quoted the Old Testament for literal fulfillment of messianic prophecies, which made references to prophecy in Scripture authoritative. A direct prophecy presents an Old Testament predictive messianic event that foretells Jesus' first coming or His second yet to come. With this type of prophecy, prophets clearly foretold of the future king in plain language, which in turn, Jesus literally fulfilled with His first coming or will fulfill with His second.

One easily can recognize a direct prophecy because the New Testament authors quoted or rendered their own from the Old Testament in the New Testament. Sometimes passages contain a combination of one or more Old Testament foretellings. (See point three below.) However, a direct prophecy may contain signs and types within it. Nonetheless, Jesus literally fulfilled prophecy. The below show examples of different direct prophecies.

- Prophet Zechariah described the coming of Christ: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matt 21:5 KJV) and "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zech 9:9; cf. Isa 62:11).
- Jesus came as a God of the living regarding the resurrection and future state to come. "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err" (Mark 2:36) and "Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of

Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God (Exod 3:6).

- "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me" (Matt 27:9-10; cf. Jer 32:6-9; Zech 11:12).

Typological (Foreshadow of Christ in the Old Testament as Identified in the New)

Typology prefigures or foreshadows an event, person, or institution from the Old Testament that serves as an example of another of the same in the New. Ramm further explained typology as the "interpretation of the Old Testament based on the fundamental theological unity of the two testaments whereby something in the Old will shadows, prefigures, adumbrates something in the New" (1981, p. 223). Adumbrates means foreshadows or something to come. A type has divine intention and purpose (Bernard, 2005). The type foreshadows things from the Old Testament to greater truths in the New. It predicts and looks ahead for the antitype. For every Old Testament type, a greater exists with a New Testament antitype. The antitype always is greater and superior than the type.

The type's fulfillment occurs in the good things from the person and work of Jesus Christ, the antitype that corresponds to something prior. One example of a type comes from Heb 10:1. It supports the Old Testament "law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves" (NIV). The law of Moses (type) foreshadows Jesus Christ, the Law fulfilled (antitype). The Old Testament type with the New Testament antitype divinely reveal Jesus throughout the covenants, bringing unity to the message of redemption.

Types come in the forms of persons, things, actions, events, institutions, and offices (Bernard, 2005). The below shows examples of each.

- **Persons.** All in Adam die, but those in Christ will be made alive (1 Cor 15:22).
- **Things.** The rock at Horeb in the wilderness is an antitype to the type Jesus the Rock (1 Cor 10:4).

- **Actions.** Moses lifted up the bronze serpent on a pole for healing. Anyone who looked at the bronze snake lived" (Num 21:9a NIV). Jesus lifted up on the cross for our salvation is the type to the antitype from Moses (John 3:14-15).
- **Events.** It rained 40 days during the Flood (Gen 7:4) and Israel wandered the wilderness for 40 years (Num 14:33), both a type for trials and testing for Jesus being tempted in the desert for 40 days (Matt 4:2).
- **Institutions.** Giving a sacrificial burnt offering of the herd, a male without blemish at the door of the tabernacle (Lev 1:3) foreshadows Christ, without blemish, as the sacrificial offering on the cross (John 1:29). Another example involves covenant. The type is the Mosaic Covenant in Jer 31:32. The New Covenant is the antitype because the former had been faultless (Heb 8:7). Thus, the second is a better covenant with better promises established upon Jesus as its Mediator (8:6-8). The old is ready to vanish away (v.13).
- **Offices.** Melchizedek (Gen 14:17-20) prefigures the kingship and priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb 5:5-10; 6:19-20; 7:1-22).

Symbolic (Representation of One Thing in Scripture With Another)

Prophecy contains a symbolic feature that one can understand only through proper interpretation of a symbol. A symbol shows a thing that stands for something else. It differs from a type because a symbol might represent something past, present, and future. One finds two rules to follow when interpreting symbols that involve understanding multiple meanings and using biblical context to define the meanings. First, Ritenbaugh (1992) said that several different symbols may represent the same reality in the Bible: "The church is symbolized as a woman, a building in which Christians are living stones, a human body of which Christ is the Head, and a family of which Christians are brothers" (Forerunner, 1992). Bernard (2005) pointed out that a particular symbol may take on various meanings. The lion means Satan in 1 Pet 5:8 and Jesus in Rev 5:5. Let Scripture interpret itself to understand the symbol (Bernard, 2005; Ritenbaugh, 1992). Look to the context of the biblical passage, both parallel and surrounding, for interpretation. For example, Christ explains the meaning of different symbols, seven stars, and seven lampstands in Rev 1:20.

Symbolic prophecy uses eight categories of symbols that are objects, creatures, actions, numbers, names, colors, directions and places (Conner, 1980). See below for examples.

- **Objects.** The wind symbolizes the Holy Spirit (John 3:8; Acts 2:2).
- **Creatures.** A lamb of God shows Jesus Christ's sacrifice to take away sin from the world (John 1:29).
- **Actions.** Baptism symbolizes salvation in Jesus Christ (Acts 22:16; Rom 6:3-4; 1 Pet 3:21).
- **Numbers.** Seven signifies perfection, completeness, or fullness (Gen 2:1-3; Josh 6:1-5; Luke 17:4).
- **Furniture.** The brazen altar suggests Jesus' redemptive work for the atonement for sin on the cross (1 John 2:1-2).
- **Names.** Jesus symbolizes His function, "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21b).
- **Colors.** Purple signifies royalty in Mark 15:17.
- **Directions.** The Promised Land represents a person receiving the mind of Christ, the new earth--Abraham looked for a city, which has foundations whose builder & maker is God (Heb 11:9-10).
- **Places.** New Jerusalem symbolizes the holy city of heaven (Matt 5:25; Rev. 21:9-10).

Closing

Prophecy originates from God who inspired the prophets to convey it as His messengers to suit His purposes. Their fulfillment brings salvation in all its fullness to all people. Fulfilled prophecies come in different forms such as parables, double references, and figurative language. However, the basic framework for understanding Christ in prophecy fundamentally resides in three basic types: Direct, typological, and symbolic. Understanding these three types of prophecies, with revelation from the Holy Spirit, brings greater understanding of the hidden things of God.

Inspired prophets clearly communicated what God intended to be understood, embraced, and acted upon to suit His purposes. The Old Testament contains 1,239 prophecies of different types. About 300 of these prophecies relate to Jesus (Barton, 1973; Fairchild, 2014). The volume of prophecy indicates the focal point of God's revelation, the incarnation, life, and teachings of Christ—all fulfillments of prophecy in their own right. The force behind these messianic-prophecies lay within all their various forms, across so many periods, and funneled through such an eclectic array of personalities. When one examines messianic prophecy, with openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance, the understanding becomes clear, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor 5:19). He foretold it in great and varied detail and fulfilled it by dotting every *i* and crossing every *t*.

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