

THE END TIMES

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Do We All Worship the Same God?

Contrary to popular thought, Christianity is not a majority world religion. Less than one third of the world's population is classified as Christian. Islam is the largest and fastest growing world religion. In fact, no longer can America say it is a Christian society. More than ever, her people come from culturally non-Christian nations, and Islam will soon replace Judaism as America's second-largest religion. Nearly five million Buddhists live here, Hindu temples dot the landscape, and minarets call Muslims to prayer.

Through interaction we discover that people of diverse faiths are very much alike. Most are friendly, morally upright, and hard working. The moral and ethical teachings of these religions make a valuable contribution to the society in which we all live. Observing this, the question naturally arises—do we all receive teachings from the same God, but just call him by a different name?

Each religion has its *Holy Books* describing its gods and a system of faith for interacting with these gods. But the Judeo-Christian Bible is unique in that it contains a built-in touchstone to prove its God is the only true God. Prophecy that is seen to be fulfilled is a simple, but powerful proof that the Bible is the inspired word of the only true God. Outside of a few vague statements, no other writings of world religion contain prophecy—no means of proving that their gods really exist.

PROPHETIC PROOFS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Hundreds of events prophesied in the Judeo-Christian Bible have already been fulfilled. Before Jesus entered this world, over 300 Old Testament prophecies spelled out the events that would detail his life. Over 700 years before his birth, the prophet Micah foretold the actual town where Jesus would be born: "*But as for you, Bethlehem... from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.*" (Micah 5:2) The following are but a few of the over 300 prophecies documented as fulfilled in the extraordinary events of Jesus' life:

- A teacher of parables—Psalm 78:2 (fulfilled: Matt. 13:34, 35)
- Betrayed by a friend—Psalm 41:9 (fulfilled: Matt. 10:4)
- Silent before his accusers—Isaiah 53:7 (fulfilled: Matt. 27:12)
- Wounded and bruised—Isaiah 53:5 (fulfilled: Matt. 27:26)
- Crucified with thieves—Isaiah 53:12 (fulfilled: Matt. 27:38)
- Garments parted/lots cast—Psalm 22:18 (fulfilled: John 19:23, 24)

- Offered gall and vinegar—Psalm 69:21 (fulfilled: Matt. 27:34)
- Side was pierced—Zechariah 12:10 (fulfilled: John 19:34, 37)
- Bones not broken—Psalm 34:20 (fulfilled: John 19:33, 36)
- Buried in rich man's tomb—Isaiah 53:9 (fulfilled: Matt. 27:57-60)

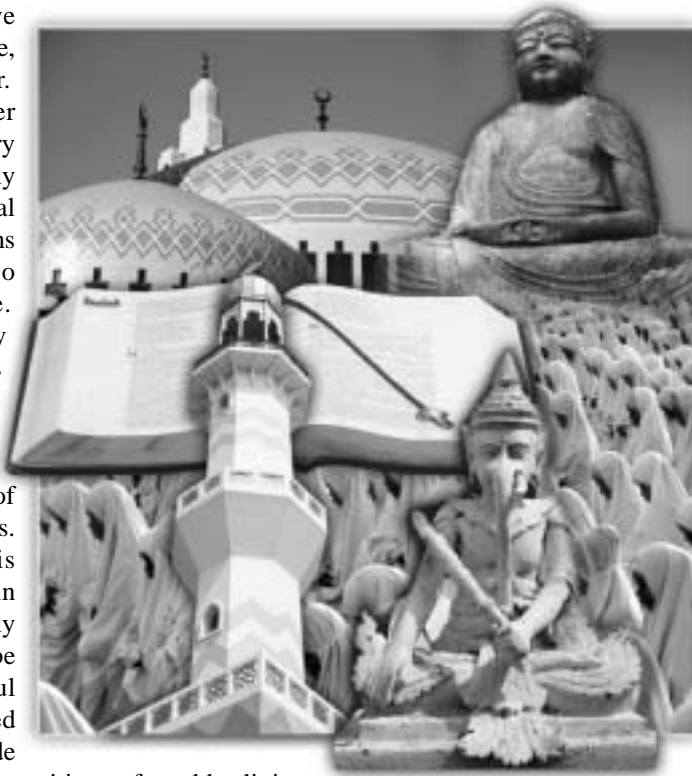
The most striking of Old Testament prophecies are those relating to Israel's final restoration. The rebirth of the state of Israel in

1948 was a miracle of history (Ezek. 37:1-11; Luke 21:29,30). Never before has a nation been destroyed, its people dispersed to the ends of the earth, and then, nearly two thousand years later, regathered to their homeland and reestablished as a nation—never to be removed again. The Bible says that Israel "*shall not be plucked up*", "*any more forever*" (Jer. 31:38-40; Amos 9:14,15). Also, Zechariah prophesied that Jerusalem would be liberated by Israel in a war with the Arabs. Prophecies being fulfilled in Israel alone are the strongest proof that the Judeo-Christian Bible is inspired by the only true and living God. Isa. 44:6-9; Zech. 12:2-6

Ezekiel 26 contains a remarkable prophecy concerning the city of Tyre, the commercial hub of the world for centuries. The metropolis of Tyre occupied the coast while some of its

people lived on an island a half mile out into the sea. Several main points stand out in this prophecy. Many nations would attack Tyre (26:3). Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the mainland metropolis (26:8). The debris of the city would be cast into the water (26:12). The soil of Tyre would be scraped down to the bare rock then thrown into the sea (26:4,12). Fishermen would spread their nets over the site (26:5). Tyre would never be built again. Ezk. 26:14

In fulfillment of this prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar did capture the mainland city. Then, over 200 hundred years later, Alexander the Great demolished the old mainland city again, and with the debris, built a causeway 200 feet wide out to the island city of Tyre. To complete the causeway, Alexander's army literally scraped the soil off the old city down to bare rock to smooth out the causeway surface. Finally, he erected towers and war engines and conquered the island fortress of Tyre—a remarkable fulfillment of verses 4 and 12 of Ezekiel.



Tyre, in fulfillment of verse 3, was sacked and restored numerous times by many nations until its final destruction in 1291. In fulfillment of verse 14, never again was there an attempt to rebuild the Tyre of old. Since then, even today, Tyre is the *“place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea.”*

NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECIES

Jesus prophesied that Herod’s Temple would be completely destroyed (Luke 21:56). History well documents this destruction in AD 70 by the armies of Rome. Then, in Luke 21:20, 21, Jesus made a remarkable prediction concerning Jerusalem’s destruction and the sparing of the Christian church on the scene at that time. *“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains.”*

After Vespasian with his Roman legions overthrew most all the fortified places in Israel, he began the siege of Jerusalem. Then a strange thing happened. Political instability broke out in Rome at the death of the Emperor. Vespasian withdrew his armies and rushed back to Rome. Titus, son of the new Emperor Vespasian, later returned and destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, but history records that the Christians escaped this carnage by having fled to the mountains to hide.

The God of the Bible challenges false gods to declare the end from the beginning—Isaiah 46: 9, 10: *“For I am God, and there is no other... declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.”* No other world religion contains a system of prophecy to prove the existence of its gods. No other world religion can stand up to this challenge submitted by the one true God to prove who is true and who is false.

THE GOD OF SCIENCE

The sacred writings of various religions make statements within the province of science that provide another test of their authenticity. If their scientific statements are in reality superstitions, these so called *sacred books* are disqualified as the inspired writings of God. If, however, the scientific statements of any purported holy writings agree with the facts of science today, then that would be proof of being the inspired words of a true God. Only the true God could cause scientific facts to be accurately recorded thousands of years before scientists had the knowledge to verify them, and the Judeo-Christian Bible abounds with such scientific facts.

FLAT VERSUS ROUND EARTH: For thousands of years people believed the earth was flat. This was taught in both Hindu and Buddhist writings. In the 1900s, Arabs spoke of infidels being pushed over the edge into space. In the 1500s, the first ship sailed *around* the world, proving the earth was round. But the Judeo-Christian Bible stated this long ago. The prophet Isaiah (40:22) spoke of the *“circle of the earth.”* Solomon wrote, *“[God] inscribed a circle upon the face of the deep.”* (Prov. 8:27). About 3,000 years ago, our Bible said the earth was round, but this was not verified until 500 years ago.

OCEAN DEPTHS AND PATHS OF THE SEA: Until recently, people thought the ocean floor was sandy like the desert and saucer shaped. But in the 1900s oceanographers found the sea had many deep valleys. The Marianas Trench in the Pacific is so deep that if

Mt. Everest (29,000 feet high) was dropped into it, the peak would still be a mile below the water’s surface. Also, the Atlantic Ocean contains an undersea range of mountains 10,000 miles long.

The Bible spoke of the valleys and mountains of the sea thousands of years before scientists discovered them. In Psalm 18:15 (NIV) David wrote of God being the creator of *“the valleys of the sea.”* God asked Job (38:16 NIV): *“Have you walked in the recesses [valleys] of the sea?”* The prophet Jonah was thrown off a ship and spoke of falling to the bottom of the *mountains in the sea.* Jonah 2:6

One day in the 1800s, Matthew Maury, an officer in the United States Navy, was reading his Bible. In Psalm 8:8 he read of the ocean creatures that swim in the *“paths of the sea.”* How could this be? He never knew there was such a thing and set about to find these paths. Maury discovered that the oceans have many paths or currents, which were like rivers flowing through the sea. Maury wrote the first book on oceanography and became known as *the pathfinder of the seas—the father of modern navigation.*

WHAT HOLDS UP THE EARTH: Three thousand years ago Hindu sacred writings described the earth as resting on the backs of several huge elephants, which were riding on the back of a huge turtle swimming in a sea. Greek mythology claims that the god Atlas was holding the earth on his shoulders. But our Bible says in Job 26:7, *“[God] hangeth the earth on nothing.”* What a remarkable statement of fact. The earth is suspended in space. Nothing is holding it up. Only God could have revealed this to Job as he was moved by the holy Spirit. 2 Pet. 1:21

PLEIADES, ORION AND ARCTURUS: Nearly 3000 years ago some astonishing scientific insights were recorded in the book of Job. Concerning the wonders of His creation, God poses three questions to Job (38:31, 32) *“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?”*

“Canst thou ...loose the bands of Orion?” The noted astronomer, Garrett P. Serviss, wrote about the bands of Orion in his book *Curiosities of the Sky.* In it he states that at the present time Orion’s band consists of an almost perfect straight line (band) of stars about equally spaced. Every star in Orion is traveling its own course, independent of all the others: one star is traveling at a certain speed in one direction; a second is traveling in a different direction at another speed; and the third is going in a third direction and at a still different speed. In fact, each of these stars are bound for different parts of the universe, so that the bands will one day be dissolved.

“Canst thou bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades...?” Photographs now reveal that 250 blazing suns in the Pleiades are all traveling together in one common direction. Concerning this cluster, Dr. Robert Trumpler from Lick Observatory states: *“...the whole cluster is moving in a southeasterly direction. The Pleiades stars may thus be compared to a swarm of birds, flying together to a distant goal. This leaves no doubt that the Pleiades are not a temporary or accidental agglomeration of stars, but a system in which the stars are bound together by a close kinship.”* Thus, just like the reference found in the book of Job, Trumpler announced that the stars in the Pleiades are all bound together as a family of birds on their journey through space.



“Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?” Garrett Serviss wrote: “Arcturus, one of the greatest suns in the universe, is a runaway whose speed of flight is 257 miles per second. Arcturus, we have every reason to believe, possesses thousands of times the mass of our sun. Think of it! Our sun is traveling only 12 1/2 miles a second, but Arcturus is traveling 257 miles a second. Think then of the prodigious momentum this motion implies.”

Charles Burckhalter, of the Chabot Observatory, added an interesting note regarding Arcturus: “This high velocity places Arcturus in that very small class of stars that apparently are a law unto themselves.... Arcturus is a runaway. Newton gives the velocity of a star under control as not more than 25 miles a second, and Arcturus is going 257 miles a second. Therefore, combined attraction of all the stars we know cannot stop him or even turn him in his path.” When Mr. Burckhalter later saw the text in the book of Job, he made a statement that has attracted worldwide attention: “The study of the Book of Job and its comparison with the latest scientific discoveries has brought me to the matured conviction that the Bible is an inspired book and was written by the One who made the stars.”

OTHER RELIGIONS ON THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES

The Hindu writings, the Vedas and Uparushads, consider that “all the objects and phenomena of nature which man is surrounded, are animate and divine.” This includes the sun, moon, earth, clouds, rain, rivers, seas and rocks as being alive. Buddhist writers also ascribe life to numerous nonliving objects—sun, moon, lightning, rainbows, mountains, etc. The Taoist and Confucian writings of China contain similar thoughts. The Koran, the holy writings of Islam, do not contain many of the ancient superstitions, yet its observations of the universe are seriously flawed. The Koran speaks of seven literal heavens which are solid. Mohammed wrote that “the sun sets in a sea of black mud.” By contrast, Judeo-Christian Scripture anticipated scientific discovery by 3,000 years—truly inspired by the God and Creator of the Universe.

THE TRUE PATH TO SALVATION

All non-Christian religions believe eternal life is obtained by noble works decreed in their respective sacred writings. However, Christians believe that the only basis for salvation (from Adamic condemnation and death, pronounced back in Eden) is faith in Jesus. “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) “The wages of sin is death: The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ the Lord.” (Rom. 6:23)

Thus, Christian doctrine confirms that noble works will not save us. Only faith that Jesus died for our sins will save us out from under the curse of death. On first look, this doctrine seems to leave out billions of non-Christians who have never accepted or have never even heard the name of Jesus as the only way to salvation. Does this mean that these billions are lost? The answer to this perplexing question is found in 1 Timothy 2:3-6, where the Apostle Paul states, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For

there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus: Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Yes, all the billions who have ever lived are going to be delivered from Adamic death by Jesus’ life offered in exchange for the life lost in Adam: “As in Adam all die [all were born in sin] even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (I Cor. 15:22) Then, after the resurrection from Adamic death, all will have a fair and equal opportunity to come to a knowledge of this truth.

Most non-Christians have died without ever hearing this wonderful truth.

Careful Bible study reveals a loving God who has provided a future opportunity for all men to learn righteousness. “...when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isa. 26:9) Jesus confirms this in John 5:28-29 (RVS): “...the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and

shall come forth; they that have done good to a resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment.” All will be raised from the dead. First, “they that have done good.”

This refers to the true believers in Jesus

now. During Christ’s return, these will be raised to spiritual life and united with their heavenly Lord. Then will follow the resurrection of the remainder of men who have not yet had a full chance to learn righteousness through Christ. They will come forth to a “resurrection of judgment.” The King James Bible, translated in AD 1611, grossly mistranslated the word *judgment* with the word *damnation*. The Greek word in the text is *krisis* and it actually denotes a *crucial testing time*. The *crisis* or trial time for the church is in this present life, but the *crisis* or trial time of the remainder of mankind will be after their resurrection in God’s Kingdom here on earth. Thus, a *resurrection to judgment* is a *process*—not an instantaneous rendering of a final sentencing to life or death. The Apostle Peter confirms this when he says that the judgment day is a thousand years. 2 Peter 3:8

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD NON-CHRISTIANS

We should love as God loves. Although the world is at enmity with God now, they are His creation, and “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son” to die for them. (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8) While the majority of the world’s population are still under the death sentence brought about by sin, they will be given a full opportunity to learn righteousness. Some will not have responsive hearts to God’s offer of salvation through His Son until they come forth from the grave and learn truth and obedience in the Kingdom. (Isa. 35:10) By this time, all will certainly have learned the **one basic lesson that God has been teaching for over 6000 years—the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its bitter consequences.**

Meantime, we should *do good unto all men*, that they might witness the grace of God in our lives. The time will come when all the peoples of the earth will know, love and worship the same true God. They will praise Him for His merciful plan when: “... the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Rev. 22:17

