

PROPHECY
— AND —
MODERN
TIMES



*Finding Hope and
Encouragement in the Last Days*

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Encouragement in the Last Days*

W. CLEON SKOUSEN

FOREWORD BY EZRA TAFT BENSON



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PREFACE



The original text for *Prophecy and Modern Times* was finished in 1938 and published that following year. Since then, it has steadily grown in popularity, captivating hundreds of thousands of readers for almost 80 years.

The book's enduring appeal springs from its many hopeful messages gleaned from prophets of both ancient and modern times.

When Dr. W. Cleon Skousen first sat down to sift through the vast multitude of recorded prophecy, his goal was to highlight the most important nuggets in a way that everyone could understand, appreciate, and apply to their own personal lives. "Prophecy," he said, "is a warning sign that can save people a great deal of misery, turmoil, and outright destruction if they would simply listen and obey the word of the Lord."

The final product was an organized collection of quotes, commentary, and analysis on several hundred prophetic declarations that came straight from the Bible,

The Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, The Pearl of Great Price, and statements recorded by prophets of recent times.

After the book was published, Dr. Skousen said that one of the most common questions he was asked was if any of these highlighted prophecies had already been fulfilled. The answer was always a yes, and “in very specific and dramatic ways,” he said, as shown in the pages that follow.

Dr. Skousen said he approached the subject as would a journalist or a reporter who looks for evidence and understanding, and then reports the findings to others. He said this book is that report.

As for his great love of the scriptures and knowledge of history, Dr. Skousen attributed that to early training from his mother. She had the gift of teaching, he said, and could enthrall any group of listeners, especially her children, with inspirational words of insight that brilliantly taught and warmly edified. That early home training was the starting place for his passion to seek out understanding across a broad spectrum of demanding subjects.

“One of the greatest compliments I get,” he said, “is when someone comes up to me and says, ‘this is so simple, why did it take you so long to write it?’ That makes me smile because it means all of that difficult and painstaking labor struck home - and that makes it all worthwhile.”

Prophecy and Modern Times is the perfect handbook for those seeking guidance, comfort, and a safe path through today's tumultuous and challenging times. It is a book for the ages, not because of what Dr. Skousen said, but because of the prophets he quotes whose most important declarations are now readily reachable in fewer than 150 pages.

—Paul B. Skousen

APRIL 6, 2017

FOREWORD

by Ezra Taft Benson

Prophecy is a miracle of knowledge of events before they transpire. Prophecy is a history in reverse. It is neither speculation nor guessing, but it is a divine disclosure of future events through inspired instruments.

The Lord has known the end from the beginning. To His prophets He revealed the important events of this world from the very genesis until the end thereof. To Adam, Abraham, Enoch, the brother of Jared, Lehi and other prophets, the Lord has made clear His secrets and the blue-print of His plans for the Human family and all creation. To Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times - the greatest of all dispensations - He said:

“Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, the Great I Am, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the same which looked upon the wide expanse of eternity, and all the seraphic hosts of heaven, before the world was made;

“The same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes;

“I am the same which spake, and the world was made, and all things came by me.”¹

Prophecy is recognized as a characteristic feature of the ministry in a Gospel Dispensation. A prophet is one who speaks for God under the inspiration of Heaven. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”² Paul declares prophecy to be one of the most desirable of all spiritual endowments.

Man has always been interested in the future. This has led to extended speculation, much of which has been fruitless and even harmful. The history of humanity has, to a large extent, been one of groping blindly in the dark, fearing for the future and yet resisting the guiding hand of inspired men who would willingly lead mankind in the path of safety. While ever seeking happiness, they have pursued their own willful ways, attempting shortcuts and trying panaceas, paying little or no attention to the more sure word of prophecy. As a result, man has felt little security as he has attempted to scan the future. His plans have been uncertain and his heart filled with anxiety.

Through the ages a kind Heavenly Father, loving His children, has pointed the way and endeavored to persuade them to hearken to the word of prophecy and escape the

1 D&C 38:1-3.

2 2 Peter 1:21.

ills which men heap upon themselves. He has offered the enjoyment of peace of mind, security, prosperity and exaltation through obedience. At the same time, He has pointed out the disastrous results of failure to heed the warnings of the prophets.

Yes, the prophets of God have had vital messages for us in the past, as they have in the critical days of the present. In the even more critical days of the future, we will do well to heed their counsel. Had we understood and believed their words in the past, many of our difficulties might have been averted. It is well that we give sincere and prayerful consideration to the great prophecies yet to be fulfilled in the days immediately ahead - in modern times. It is these prophecies which have in them so much of interest and value to the people of our day. It behooves all to give prayerful study and attention to the inspired word of prophecy as we anxiously face an uncertain future, ever remembering the Lord's word to the prophet Amos, that "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."³

It is to this difficult but challenging task of making such study easier and more fruitful that Elder W. Cleon Skousen has set his hand. The study has consumed much of the time that could be snatched from a busy professional and active church service. It has been an unselfish labor by one who loves the Word of the Lord.

3 Amos 3:8.

Within these covers Elder Skousen has brought together prophecies bearing on modern times, which he discusses in an uncompromising and forthright manner. Every person interested in present and future events in this war-torn world will profit from a careful perusal of these pages. The author speaks out of a rich life as student of the scriptures, ardent missionary and popular teacher. His compilation, orderly arrangement, and comment on the prophecies pertaining to our day will prove a valuable and worthwhile contribution to the religious literature of modern times.

May all those who read these pages be impressed with the goodness of the Lord to His children, the infallibility of His inspired word, and the importance of living in accordance with the truths herein proclaimed.

Part I



INTRODUCTION

A Remarkable Prophecy in 1832

During 1830-1831, the feature stories of the American press carried news of a threatened civil war. The controversy was over the question of "Nullification." Did South Carolina have the right to nullify the new Federal tariff law? The obvious effect of such a right would be the annihilation of the powers of Congress. If South Carolina could nullify a federal law, so could other states. It would be the end of the Union.

Andrew Jackson was president and the political leaders of all parties waited anxiously to see what he would do. If he bowed meekly to this spirit of rebellion, other states would follow. If he dispatched an army to South Carolina to enforce the federal law, many predicted strong and immediate military resistance.

President Jackson was not a "church" man but he was a praying man. In this moment of national crisis he was pleading for divine guidance. Would there be civil war? What could he do to avoid it?

The President did not ask for a revelation, merely wisdom. As subsequent events clearly proved, his prayers were answered. His "wisdom" averted civil war in the United States for a whole generation.

But the prayers of President Jackson were more completely, though indirectly, answered through a divine manifestation which warned the people of the United States that eventually civil war would engulf the nation.

The revelation was not received in the White House nor did it come to the President. It came to a humble young man, twenty-seven years of age, who was residing at Kirtland, Ohio. His name was Joseph Smith.

It was Christmas Day, 1832, nearly three years after the famous debate on “Nullification” between Webster and Hayne that Joseph Smith received the answer to the most provoking and dynamic issue in the nation:

“Thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls... . For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations in order to defend themselves... . And it shall come to pass after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.”⁴

On December 25, 1832, Joseph Smith therefore knew six specific things which the Lord had decreed would shortly come to pass:

1. That in spite of the President’s efforts there would be a civil war in the United States.
2. That it would begin with the rebellion of South Carolina.

4 D&C 87:1-4.

3. That the spirit of rebellion would spread among the "Southern States" until they divided against the Northern States.
4. That it would be a war of major proportions resulting in the death and misery of many souls.
5. That the Southern States would call on foreign nations, including Great Britain, to assist them in their cause.
6. That slavery rather than "nullification" would be the issue and that slaves would rise against their masters and be marshaled for war.

How to Interpret Prophecy

There are two significant things which this prophecy illustrates. First, the Lord rarely, if ever, signifies the exact date when a prediction will come to pass. He will disclose the period and the accompanying circumstances but not the precise date.

In fact, almost immediately after this prophecy was given, the clouds of threatened civil strife began to dissipate themselves. The President's vigorous action against South Carolina seemed to dam the tide of rebellion. By the end of the famous "Jacksonian Era," there was little fear remaining in the minds of most people concerning further difficulty. The threat of civil war was generally considered a dead issue.

Nevertheless, the Lord's declaration stood.

The second thing to note in connection with this prophecy is that when it was finally fulfilled, it was fulfilled to the very letter. It requires no stretching of the imagination or history to make the facts literally fit the prediction.

Not only is this characteristic true of the above prophecy, it is likewise true of all prophecy. As we look back down the corridors of the past, we find that every prophetic declaration authorized by heaven has been literally fulfilled. The Great Flood was literal. The crucifixion of the Lord was literal. And so was the destruction of Jerusalem. Prophecy is not poetry. It is history in reverse. It needs no private interpretation. It is fulfilled literally.

In the following pages we will therefore keep these two keys of interpretation in mind: first, that anyone attempting to apply a mathematical formula to prophecy so as to fix exact dates is operating outside of the prophetic pattern which the Lord has laid down. He gives us the season, but not the date. Secondly, whatever the Lord has declared concerning the past was literally fulfilled. We may reasonably expect the same of all prophecies dealing with the future.

The Purpose of Prophecy

The purpose of prophecy is frequently misunderstood. It is not the Lord's purpose to completely remove the veil which guards the future. Too much prophecy would defeat the plan of salvation. Life on earth was designed for our education and testing. As Jehovah declared concerning the earth before it was made:

“We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”⁵

Prophecy is usually in the form of a conditional promise of reward or punishment designed to determine whether or not we will do whatsoever thing the Lord commands us. In revealing the future the Lord has exercised great care. To reveal too much would inevitably overwhelm the free agency of man and deprive us of our chance to choose. If the Lord revealed the answer to every whimsical problem arising in our lives there certainly would be no testing of the human family and practically no learning. Therefore the Lord has warned his children not to ask for prophecy or revelation on minor matters:

“For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

5 Abraham 3:24-25.

“Verily, I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will... for the power is in them wherein they are agents unto themselves.”⁶

There are some people who are not satisfied with heavenly principles to live by; they demand specific guidance for every specific problem. These are they who go out after fortune tellers, crystal gazers, familiar spirits or pseudo-psychic sooth-sayers who are as ignorant of the answers as they themselves, but who will gladly take a chance at guessing for a price.

Prophecy, however, is not guessing. Nor is it speculation. Prophecy is a divine disclosure of future events – events of which our Heavenly Father already has present and certain knowledge.

Prophecy Based Upon a Scientific Principle

There is no mystery in God’s capacity to know future events with certainty. Even men enjoy this ability to a limited extent. It is an attribute which is simply dependent upon knowledge of all the controlling factors leading up to any particular event. God, who is familiar with every influence in the cosmic universe, finds no difficulty in predetermining what will happen at any time or with any set of circumstances.

This certainty of foreknowledge grows with experience and planning.

6 D&C 58:26-28.

The Lord states that this earth is only one of countless planets which he has embellished with human, plant and animal life.⁷ Like a laboratory experiment that has been performed an infinite number of times, the omniscient Master Technician can foretell from moment to moment what to expect.

The Lord also informs us that a complete and detailed blueprint for this earth's function as a home for the human family was worked out in advance.⁸ And the part each human being would play was worked out on the basis of God's foreknowledge of how each one of us would conduct ourselves under certain conditions. Thus, in the morning of creation, God was able to reveal to Adam "whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation."⁹ And Nephi said: "The Lord knoweth all things from the beginning."¹⁰

Members of Church Expected to Know Prophecy and Its Fulfillment

"And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom. Teach diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain

7 Moses 1:35.

8 Abraham 5:3

9 D&C 107:56.

10 1 Nephi 9:6.

unto the kingdom of God that are expedient for you to understand; of things both in heaven and in earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms — that ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.”¹¹

Our Day Anticipated by All the Prophets

It should be of particular significance to all those who profess a sincere interest in the scriptures to know that God revealed more to his prophets concerning the happening of events in our day than he has concerning any other period in the history of mankind. This is the sixtieth century in the history of Adam’s children of which “God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began.”¹²

Concerning it, the Prophet Joseph Smith had this to say:

“It is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked

¹¹ D&C 88:77-80.

¹² Acts 3:21.

forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day. But they died without the sight. We are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the latter-day glory. It is left for us to see, participate in and help roll forward the latter-day glory - 'the dispensation of the fullness of times when God will gather together all things that are in heaven and all things that are upon the earth,' 'even in one'; when the Saints of God will be gathered in one from every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue when the Jews will be gathered together into one, the wicked will also be gathered together to be destroyed as spoken of by the prophets; the Spirit of God will also dwell with his people, and be withdrawn from the rest of the nations, and all things whether in heaven or on earth will be in one, even in Christ.

"The heavenly Priesthood will unite with the earthly to bring about those great purposes; and whilst we are thus united in one common cause, to roll forth the Kingdom of God, the heavenly Priesthood are not idle spectators.

"The Spirit of God will be showered down from above, and it will dwell in our midst. The blessings of the Most High will rest upon our tabernacles and our name will be handed down to future ages. Our children will rise up and call us blessed, and generations yet unborn will dwell with peculiar delight upon the scenes that we

have passed through - the privations that we have endured, the untiring zeal that we have manifested, the all but insurmountable difficulties that we have overcome in laying the foundation of a work that brought about the glory and blessing which they will realize; a work that God and angels have contemplated with delight for generations past; that fired the souls of the ancient patriarchs and prophets; a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God and the salvation of the human family.”¹³

In contemplation of our dispensation, the prophets reached across the centuries to tell us of the great events that would mark our day among the seasons of eternity. Thus, the following pages are a compilation of the ancient and modern prophecies as they relate to our times and our lives. In the program of the Lord, we have a part - it may become a most important part. The prophets wrote, therefore, to warn us and to teach us that we might perform our parts intelligently and well.

13 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 231.