

The Real Thing

Not Science Fiction

Ken Packer

A brief series of vignettes exploring prophecy
and its modern-day fulfilment

Adventure of the century?

In his book, *How to build a Time Machine*, Professor Paul Davies says, “time travel looks to be a possibility in the present state of knowledge.”

As professor of natural philosophy at Macquarie University in Sydney, and a noted science writer, he makes this statement on the basis of the laws of physics. He's not just exercising a vivid imagination. He's talking about the real thing, not science fiction.

Jesus himself publicly demonstrated the reality of space travel. But in his case he didn't need a time machine. “He rose into the sky and disappeared into a cloud, leaving them staring after him.” Acts 1.9 (Living Bible).

And he promises a repeat performance when he comes personally to transport his followers to heaven. John 14.2-3. Believers who have already died will be raised to share in this dramatic event. 1 Thessalonians 4.16-17.

Is this pure fancy? Paul Davies doesn't rule anything out. He says, “we don't yet have the last word on physics, which might have some surprises in store for us in the future.”

How true! Jesus will demonstrate the truth of this when he empowers believers to traverse the vastnesses of space in an instant of time.

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Christ's return will surely usher in the adventure of the century - believers caught up from Earth to enter heaven in a moment of time!

Amazing predictions

About 4000 years ago God made amazing predictions - put his character at stake - with seven extravagant promises to Abraham, father of Israel. (Genesis 12.1-3).

First, he said, *"I will make of you a great nation."* But eventually there came worldwide dispersion - *for 2000 years!* Did Israel's nationhood survive? Yes! Surely that is true greatness.

Second, God promised, *"I will bless you"*. Against fierce opposition and persecution, Abraham's descendants have been - and still are - preserved, protected, blessed.

Third, God said, *"I will make your name great."* Today, about three billion people (Jews, Christians, Moslems) - that's half the world population - revere Abraham.

Fourth, God said, *"You shall be a blessing."* Through Abraham our world received God's promised Saviour.

Fifth, God said, *"I will bless those who bless you."* Notice how God does bless Israel's friends.

Sixth, God said, *"I will curse him who curses you."* Note the modern-day curse on Hitler, his anti-Semitism, and his Nazi regime.

Seventh, God said, *"All peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* For centuries this has happened - and continues - through Jesus' influence.

God told Abraham, *"I am Almighty God."* Genesis 17.1.

So who is honouring Abraham's nation? None other than the God of creation!

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So many blessings Abraham is bringing you. Go the next step - get to know Abraham's God.

As a thief ! Part 1

Concerning his second coming, Jesus said, "I am coming as a thief" Revelation 16.15.

First, *people resent a thief's intrusion*. Therefore, because unbelievers think this world is theirs, they will resent Christ's return - "all the tribes of the earth will mourn." Matthew 24.30. Suddenly, though, they will learn what they should have known - "the earth is the Lord's" Psalm 24.1. He has every right to be here.

Second, *the thief is always expected*. So we lock our homes, secure our vehicles, and don't leave valuables lying around.

A remarkable twist here is that Jesus' return is *not* expected by many people, even though he took the world by surprise at his first coming, warned of his second coming, and predicted the exact world conditions which will precede his return.

Third, *a thief gives clear evidence of his visit*. However some people have thought that Jesus' coming refers to a spiritual presence only. But see Matthew 24.29-30 -

"The powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Nothing like that has happened. Not yet.

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Jesus said -

"Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect him."

- Matthew 24.44

As a thief! Part 2

We all know the house thief's best kept secret - the date and time of his visit!

Jesus used this universal awareness to illustrate his return. He said, "Take note: I will come as unexpectedly as a thief!" Revelation 16.15 (Living Bible). He was talking about his second coming to Earth.

Notice, **first**, a thief targets property. When Jesus comes he will be looking, not for the property of others, but only for what is rightfully his, namely, those who love and serve God.

Second, a thief takes only that which is of value. So what will Jesus look for? He has put a high value on those who want what he now offers - things like his generous forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God, and the joy of spending eternity with him. Jesus won't take any unbelievers.

Third, a thief leaves clear evidence of his call - *valuable goods are missing!* When all true Christians are "caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4.17), what a gap will be left by those who are now "*salt of the earth*" and "*light of the world*"! Matthew 5.13-14.

Will it really happen? Jesus' promise is certain. His words are true. ¹

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Jesus' coming has high priority - He said, "*Surely I am coming quickly.*" Revelation 22.20.

¹ John 14.6

As the days of Noah

Jesus said “as the days of Noah, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” Matthew 24.37.

Why would Jesus link his modern-day second coming to Noah's primitive era?

Consider these four surprises -

First, Noah belonged to a *high form of civilisation*. This included city and pastoral life and the development of arts and manufactures. Genesis 4.16-22.

Second, today's *population explosion* also matches Noah's time. Since the Bible makes special mention of this, the increase must have been significant: “men began to multiply on the face of the earth.” Genesis 6.1.

How incredibly accurate are Jesus' predictions. But that's not all.

Third, in Noah's day there was also *widespread wickedness*. Genesis 6.5. What a picture of our own day as this present age hurtles towards coming divine judgment.

Fourth, in the days of Noah, God *postponed judgment*. He gave men an additional 120 years to repent. Genesis 6.3. But mankind ignored God's act of grace and remained defiant and unrepentant. Sounds familiar?

The good news here? As we see this unlikely prophecy coming true before our eyes, it's easy to believe Jesus' other claim when he said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”¹

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To recognise God's coming judgment is *imperative*.
To recognise his great love for us is *essential*.
To recognise his call to repent is *urgent*.

¹ John 14.6.

Distinct, startling, alarming!

Jesus' second coming will be highly dramatic.

First, who of us notices an astronaut's return to earth? But compare Jesus' return. "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars¹ will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven . . . and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24.29-30.

False Messiahs can't counterfeit that!

Second, even after travelling hundreds of thousands of kilometres, an astronaut's return to earth is pinpointed to the minute.

And when Jesus returns - *after two thousand years!* - he too will find things exactly as he predicted - "for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time." Matthew 24.21.

Third, if we met an astronaut in the street, would we know? Highly unlikely.

But the world will certainly know when Jesus comes to judge the nations (Matthew 25.31-32), introduces righteous rule over the earth (Revelation 19.15-16), and teaches his ways to all peoples (Isaiah 2.3-4).

Meanwhile we can ask Jesus to reign in our heart right now.

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It is not what the world is coming to, but who is coming to the world.

¹ comets referred to as stars: The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, *Astronomy*, page 308

Easy to believe!

The Bible mentions seven “raptures”.

- 1) “Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.” Genesis 5.24.
- 2) “Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” 2 Kings 2.11.
- 3) Jesus “was received up into heaven.” Mark 16.19.
- 4) Paul was caught up to heaven. 2 Corinthians 12.2.
- 5) The apostle John was called up into heaven. Revelation 4.1.
- 6) At the end of this church age, all believers, worldwide, will be caught up to heaven.
1 Thessalonians 4.17.
- 7) God's two end-time witnesses will “ascend to heaven” Revelation 11.12.

Two of those events are yet future - (1) a global rapture of all living believers, with simultaneous resurrection of all deceased believers; (2) the end-time witnesses.

Notice how this worldwide rapture of the living is *easier to visualise* than raising long dead corpses!

But Michael Crichton's novel, *Jurassic Park*, tells of prehistoric creatures brought back to life by using a mere piece of information - their DNA!

Perhaps this fictitious story shows that all God needs to resurrect departed believers is just pieces of information - plus, no doubt, a bit more!

So if resurrection is easy to picture - and rapture even easier! - God expects we won't have trouble believing what he intends doing very soon.

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“We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.” 1 Corinthians 15.51-52.

Eternity revealed

Is it true that “eye has not seen, nor ear heard . . . the things which God has prepared for those who love him”? 1 Corinthians 2.9.

No! That Bible passage goes on to say, “But God has revealed them to us through his Spirit”, and here's what is revealed -

First, stepping into eternity means “to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” - *in heaven!* 2 Corinthians 5.8. What a glorious prospect! No wonder Christian funerals are able to be times of great comfort and rejoicing.

Second, what can we take with us into eternity? - only *people!* So God calls us to be “fishers of men” Matthew 5.19, seeking to attract as many as possible to the Lord Jesus Christ.

What will help to make heaven special isn't *things*. It is people freed, for all eternity, from the power, guilt, and presence of sin.

Third, heaven will be a place of total joy - no more pain, no more sorrow, no more tears. Wow! See Revelation 21.4.

Fourth, God's good news to believers is “you *have* eternal life.” 1 John 5.13. Not “you might have” or “will have”. No, it's a *present* possession. What greater comfort could we ask?

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“Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today he is ready to save you.”

- 2 Corinthians 6.2 (The Living Bible)

God's unique resource

God enriches and strengthens every aspect of our lives through his ability to accurately foretell the future.

First, he says, “I, the Lord, do not change.” Malachi 3.6. He also declares that he loves us. John 3.16. Those two statements, when put together, amount to the following wonderful prophecy: God will continue, on and on, loving us with an *unchanging love*!

What more powerful support and encouragement could we ever ask for?

Second, God is “full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in mercy and truth.” Psalm 86.15.

Together with his promise, “I do not change,” this too becomes a prophecy. It says that he won't lose his temper with us when we mess up or take wrong turns. He will never give up on us. In fact, elsewhere he says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13.5.

How enriching and supportive is his unique power of prophecy.

Third, we are especially comforted at the passing of fellow-Christian loved ones. God's promise (prophecy) is that at the resurrection we will meet them again. 1 Thessalonians 4.14-18.

Because of God's promises, even in today's security-conscious society, nothing matches the Christian's security both in this life and the next.

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“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

- Philippians 4.7

Heaven is real

The Bible mentions heaven 750 times.

First, there are three heavens - (1) our immediate atmosphere - heaven of the clouds, (2) the starry heavens, (3) God's dwelling-place - "our Father in heaven." Matthew 6.9.

Second, Jesus confirmed heaven's reality. He said, "I have come down from heaven" John 6.38, and he emphasised this twice more: John 6.51,58. And he's there now "at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12.2.

Third, God plans for all believers to join him in his dwelling-place to receive "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled." 1 Peter 1.4. (All believers are "joint heirs with Christ" Romans 8.17).

Therefore, one day soon Jesus "will descend from heaven" and "the dead in Christ will rise" to meet him in the heaven of the clouds! This is the promised resurrection of believers.

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4.17.

This catching up of all living believers is called the "rapture" because in the Bible's Latin translation - known as the Vulgate - the word "rapio" is used.

For more about this, see under heading "Easy to believe".

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To believe in heaven is not to run away from life; it is to run toward it.

History's great climax

Terrorists are confirming Bible prophecy about the end times.

God's Word uses graphic words which describe events now happening before our eyes - "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21.26.

But since human wickedness isn't God's will, why does he allow it? Well, let's not overlook how hard it is for God to capture our attention. What will it take before people are driven into God's arms with one great desire - to live their lives as he intended?

We can nevertheless be encouraged by three wonderful truths -

First, in the end times "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord." Psalm 22.27.

Second, this means that today's lawlessness will cease! God's ultimate plan is to "bring in everlasting righteousness." Daniel 9.24. That is, all world affairs will be characterised by righteousness.

Third, God will accomplish this through the Man of his choice, Jesus, when he returns to this earth in great power to establish his kingdom. Matthew 24.30.

But why is God taking so long about it? Well, he has a question too: why are we taking so long to believe in him?

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"We should think about the way we are living, and turn back to the Lord."

- Lamentations 3.40 (Bible for Today).

How unexpected!

God's ways startle us.

First, God's Son came to our world gentle, unassuming. Not at all how we would have done it.

Second, he came to our earth bodily - "in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Colossians 2.9. The Creator of the universe limited to a human body? We would never have done that. Surely that was a mistake? Not at all. What better way for God to identify with us? Christ will also return bodily. Acts 1.10-11.

Third, even Christ's resurrection from the grave was restrained - he appeared to believers only. We would have had him present himself in overwhelming power to the unbelievers. But he reserves that for his next coming. Matthew 24.30.

Fourth, his first coming was at a time when Greek philosophy said, "God isn't concerned with us."

But that's not true. "God so loved the world" that he gave us his choicest gift - his own Son. John 3.16.

Fifth, at his first coming Jesus submitted to crucifixion on behalf of sinners - not at all what we would have done. At first, even his own disciples misunderstood. And people still don't get it.

That's one reason he's coming back to sort us out.

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"Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust,
that he might bring us to God." 1 Peter 3.18.

On the right track

SETI scientists looking for intelligent life from outside planet earth are on the right track!

They just need to backdate their extra-terrestrial search. From an earlier era they will find well-documented reports of an arrival here from outer space by a visitor named Jesus who said, "I have come down from heaven." John 6.38.

But how friendly would our scientists be if they did contact extra-terrestrial intelligence that didn't meet with their expectations?

When Jesus came, although he was very friendly, brought good news, and used extraordinary healing powers, they promptly crucified him! So he rose from the dead and went back to heaven.

But many people are looking forward to another visit from Jesus because he said, "I will come again!" John 14.3.

First, at his second coming he will transform all believers then living on earth into extra-terrestrials!

Second, to do this he will again "descend from heaven." Then "we who are alive and remain shall be caught up" to meet him in the air! 1 Thessalonians 4.16-17.

Third, we don't need to have doubts about the genuineness of this remarkable event. The respected apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4.18 to *comfort* one another with this great news.

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How can Jesus do things that are totally miraculous?
He is "the power of God". 1 Corinthians 1.24.

Our future unveiled

We are privileged to know about “the things which God has prepared for those who love him . . . God has revealed them to us through his Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 2.9-10.

First, believers will be given *perfect bodies*. “The Lord Jesus Christ . . . will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body.” Philippians 3.20-21 (RV).

Second, because believers will enjoy *his perfect confidence* they will sing this song: “You . . . have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5.10.

Third, “his servants shall serve him” - *the perfect employer*. Revelation 22.3.

Fourth, God's servants will enjoy *perfect job security*. “They shall reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 22.5.

Fifth, believers will enjoy *perfect conditions*. “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain.” Revelation 21.4.

Sixth, believers will participate in a *perfect future*: “In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore.” Psalm 16.11.

Seventh, God's servants “shall see his face.” Revelation 22.4. What a privilege, seeing God *in all his glory and perfection*.

A breathtaking future!

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Will you be there?

Press freedom foreseen!

Jesus knew that in 2000 years time “this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” Matthew 24.14.

As God the Son, he had that foreknowledge.

But, **first**, to counteract opposition to such global proclamation, God recruited gifted unbelievers - all those non-Christian media people who insist on total freedom of the press. The result? Unhindered proclamation and distribution of God's Word via print, radio, television and the internet!

Second, even hundreds of years before Jesus, God foretold this about his Word - “It shall accomplish all I want it to, and prosper everywhere I send it.” Isaiah 55.11 (Living Bible).

Third, press freedom will cease prior to Christ's return. God will then use a new avenue of witness - *just two specially empowered men!* Revelation chapter 11.

He will, however, also send an angel “having the everlasting gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth - to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.” Revelation 14.6.

Why will he do this? It's his last call before Christ returns. With time for a rebellious earth to repent fast running out, God in his grace will make this one final appeal.

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God is broadcasting right now. Just open your Bible and tune in.

Proof of Christ's return

The second coming of Jesus will be physical, sensational, and witnessed globally.

So, **first**, for this most dramatic event in human history, undeniable *proof in the heavens* will be seen -

“All the nations of the earth . . . will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.” Matthew 24.30 (NIV).

Second, there will be dread *proof in his enemies' hearts* that the day of their judgment has come - “at that time . . . all the nations of the earth will mourn.” Matthew 24.30 (NIV).

Third, distinctive *geographic proof* of his coming will occur: “On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.” Zechariah 14.4.

Fourth, *political proof* that he has come will be experienced when he, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9.6), “will settle international disputes . . . all wars will stop and all military training will end.” Isaiah 2.4 (Living Bible).

To prepare us for his climactic end-time appearance, the New Testament gives 240 warnings. Have we got the message?

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Jesus' coming is unstoppable! When “the Lord Almighty has purposed . . . who can thwart him?”

- Isaiah 14.27 (NIV).

Six things Christ won't do!

Jesus Christ will soon return to our planet.

But, **first**, he won't appear on any TV talk shows. Why not? Because his return to Earth isn't to entertain or seek publicity or to drum up support. *He's coming as Earth's Ruler!*

Second, he won't address any United Nations forums. On the contrary, at his coming he will permanently dissolve what he regards as the Disunited Nations. See Daniel 2.44.

Third, he won't wrestle with ignorance about who he is. He won't have to. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." Habakkuk 2.14.

Fourth, he won't recruit an army for his personal protection because he himself is "the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1.24.

Fifth, he won't enlist a public relations team to advise him because he himself is "the wisdom of God." 1 Corinthians 1.24.

Sixth, he won't arrange for newspaper, radio or television reports of his soon arrival. He has already given adequate notice in the world's all-time best-seller (the Bible). On its last page he specifically warns "surely I am coming quickly." Revelation 22.20.

But it's not only the Bible that foretells Christ's return. Jesus announced it himself.

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Jesus could come at any time - so be ready all the time.

Suddenly it's happened!

For the first time in human history, three distinctive end-time signs are happening.

First, the prophet Daniel foretold a time when “many shall run to and fro.” Daniel 12.4. But people constantly run to and fro! So, for this to be significant, it must be something extraordinary.

In 2007, the global airline industry, servicing virtually every country in the world, flew over 2.2 billion passengers on more than 29 million scheduled flights. And forecasts predict that world air travel will keep growing by 5.4% per annum over the next ten years. (Google).

Second, the same prophecy says “knowledge shall be increased” - so this too must be highly significant. Sure enough, today's Internet provides (1) a phenomenal increase in knowledge; (2) it is on a massive, unlimited scale; (3) it is of global importance to governments, commerce, civil society and even ordinary individuals.

Third, Jesus foretold that on his return to earth “every eye will see him” Revelation 1.7. Impossible? He said it twice: “all the tribes of the earth . . . will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.” Matthew 24.30.

This would be impossible, except for one thing - television.

Those three signs show God's timetable is right on schedule.

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Christ's return is on God's agenda. Is it on yours?

The Coming One

When Jesus leaves heaven - for the second time - things will really happen.

On his first visit here, though “meek and lowly” (Matthew 11.29), he triggered events never before witnessed by man -

He died for our sins (Romans 5.6) . . . graves opened and people returned to life (Matthew 27.52-53). . . Jesus too rose from the dead . . . his disciples were said to have “turned the world upside down”. Acts 17.6.

Since that time his influence has changed history, impacting every continent.

But his next coming will shock the world with earth-shaking events beyond anything ever experienced by man.

(1) all dead believers resurrected . . . all world kingdoms fall . . . Satan is bound . . . Jesus reigns for a thousand years . . . sin is outlawed . . . all unbelievers resurrected and judged. (The book of Revelation).

(2) Jesus teaches the world from Jerusalem, he rules the nations, and all wars end. (Isaiah chapter 2). And remember, Jesus is a *Jew*.

(3) Nations will highly honour *Jews!* (Zechariah 8.23).

(4) And see this: “All nations whom you have made shall come and worship before you,

O Lord, and shall glorify your name. For you are great, and do wondrous things;

You alone are God.” Psalm 86.9-10.

What a time to be alive on earth!

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“God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.” Psalm 67.7.

The fig is budding!

Tenants don't normally return to their location after a 2000 year absence.

But it was prophesied twenty-six centuries ago that Israel would do so, returning to her land “from the four corners of the earth.” Isaiah 11.11-12. It happened in 1948.

And there's more! Israel is God's fig tree (Joel 1.7), and Jesus told a parable about this. He described Israel's end-time revival as the fig tree putting forth its leaves - springing into new life. Matthew 24.32.

He further explained that when this happens, *all the trees* will be budding. Luke 21.29-31.

Surely only God could know this would be a time of the greatest growth of nationalism in all of world history.

* In Africa alone, 53 independent and sovereign countries have emerged ¹, even though

Africa accounts for only about 14% of the world's population. ²

* In 1991 the Soviet Union suddenly collapsed, with unexpected development of independent states.

* Around the world, other groups clamour for independence. *All the trees are budding!*

Why is this important? Because when such unlikely events come true before our eyes, God makes it easy for us to trust all his other promises, including his great promise that, through Christ, he is able to save us from our sins.

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One of life's marvels - even after a 2000-year global dispersion, the Jews remain a distinct race!

¹ www.exploringabroad.com/regions/africa.htm

² around 13.75 per cent in 2005 (Wikipedia)

The Unique One

Centuries before the event, Jesus' first coming was fully outlined in the Old Testament by 25 Jewish writers.

In fact he is “the only person in history to have his ancestry, birth, character, teaching, career, reception, rejection, death, burial, and resurrection pre-written at least 500 years before his birth.”¹

But despite this portrait of Israel's coming Messiah in 333 Old Testament prophecies, the Jews *didn't recognise him* when he came!!

The Bible reveals, however, that they will recognise the truth about him just prior to his second visit to judge the Earth. “They will call on my name, and I will answer them.” Zechariah 13.9.

But because of widespread unbelief of today's Gentile nations, God has given them these gracious warnings -

First, Jesus' second coming is mentioned 240 times in the New Testament. That's one verse in every 25 verses - more times by far than any other doctrine in the entire Bible.

Second, the last words of our Lord Jesus before he went to die on the cross were about his coming again. Matthew 24 and 25.

Third, after Jesus ascended back to heaven, the first word from heaven was about his second coming. Acts 1.9-11.

The Bible's last promise and last prayer are about his second coming.

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“Yes, he's on his way! Riding the clouds, he'll be seen by every eye”
- Revelation 1.7 (The Message)

¹ *How would you recognize the Messiah*, David M. Levy

Three Bible *firsts*!

Christ's second coming is one of God's top priorities.

First, the very *first* prophecy ever uttered by man was about Christ's return -

“Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied . . . saying, Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints.” Jude 14.

Second, is Christ's return a feature in our Christmas celebrations each year? It should be! It's a vital part of the Christmas story.

Before Jesus was even born, see one of the *first* things his mother, Mary, learnt from an angel concerning Jesus -

“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest;
and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.
And he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Luke 1.32-33.

Only through his second coming will all this be fulfilled.

Third, The very *first* request in the Lord's Prayer is “Your kingdom come!” Matthew 6.10. Each time we offer that prayer do we really understand that we are asking God to send Christ back to reign on earth?

From start to finish the Bible points to Christ's second advent. No wonder the very last prayer in the Bible is “Come, Lord Jesus!” Revelation 22.20.

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We don't have to wait for Christ's return before letting him reign in our heart.

Three end-time signs

Note the Bible's accuracy in three separate matters.

First, today's nations could be using their wealth generously, blessing others, promoting world aid, etc. Instead, just on weapons alone, they spend billions of dollars.

God's Word says, “Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you . . . You have hoarded wealth *in the last days* . . . the Lord's coming is near . . . The Judge is standing at the door!” James 5.1-9 (NIV).

Second, throughout the ancient Roman Empire, Gentiles outnumbered Jews in accepting Jesus as the Messiah and entering the Christian Church.

Today the Church remains mainly Gentile. Jesus predicted this. He told the Jews, “The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.” Matthew 21.43.

Third, as we know, the Bible foretold Israel's end-time restoration and return to her land. But notice this pinpoint accuracy: “Behold, I will . . . gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame.” Jeremiah 31.8.

In contrast to other countries, and in fulfilment of this prophecy, the Israeli Government admits *all* Jews, whether medically fit or not.

What confidence we can have in the truth and accuracy of God's Word.

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God says, “My word . . . will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55.11 (NIV).

What's coming on earth?

Futurist, Alvin Toffler, wrote three best selling books “hailed for originality and unusual insight.” Known around the world for his work, Toffler, who holds multiple honorary doctorates, has influenced - among others - presidents, prime ministers and top business leaders.

In 1970 his first book, *Future Shock*, recognised mankind's trauma in trying to cope with too many changes in too short a time.

It's what Jesus foresaw: “perplexity . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.” Luke 21.25-26.

In book 2, *The Third Wave*, Toffler said “pitched political battles will be waged in many nations” (p.449). This end-time distress of nations was also foreseen by Jesus. Luke 21.25.

Toffler saw, as well, failure in how the world is governed. He said “our obsolete political structures” are hopelessly inadequate. (pp. 452-3).

Because Christ knew in advance of this inadequacy he foretold his coming takeover of world control. Revelation 11.15.

In book 3, *Power Shift*, Toffler underlined the breakup of old style authority and power which the apostle Paul foretold for “the last days” 2 Timothy 3.1-7.

Toffler had great insights. How much greater the insights of Jesus and Paul from *two thousand years earlier!*

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God lets the nations shift the scenery, but he puts on the act.
And today the stage is being set for Christ's return.

Whom can we trust?

Can we prove that Bible prophecy is the real thing - not fiction, fable or just someone's vivid imagination?

Yes! We have three practical tests of a genuine prophet.

First, we can be confident that what the Bible prophets foretell does actually happen - no exceptions. This is clearly seen from the prophecies already fulfilled.

For example, on a number of occasions Jesus foretold in specific detail how he would be arrested, tortured, crucified and that he would rise from the dead on the third day. Matthew 16.21; 17.22-23; 20.17-19. How were his words fulfilled? Literally.

Second, a Bible prophecy - whether or not it has yet to be fulfilled - doesn't oppose the rest of God's Word. That is, God's prophets never contradict the holy Scriptures.

After Jesus did rise from the dead, he showed his disciples that his earlier forecasts about his death agreed with what the Scriptures had already taught. Luke 24.44.

Third, none of the Bible's prophets lead people away from following the living God. They never drive people toward some other deity.

Jesus, the greatest of all prophets, clearly directed his disciples to the true God of heaven. John 6.38.

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Jesus

World's greatest farm

Jesus described *the greatest farm*. It's where he is busily sowing good seed (the sons of the kingdom) in a field. What field? He said, "The field is the world" Matthew 13.38. No less than *the whole world!*

Sure enough, before our eyes he is reaping a *global* harvest!

"In 1430, one person in 99 of the world's population was a Christian.

But during the seventeen years from 1980 to 1997, the number of Christians worldwide has grown three times faster than the world's population.

In 1980, one person in 16 of the world's population was a Christian.

In 1983, one person in 13 of the world's population was a Christian.

In 1997, one person in 10 of the world's population was a Christian." ¹

Time magazine (September, 2014) reports that "Christianity, the world's most populous faith" is now "booming in Asia".²

"Some 60 million Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, live in China alone, according to relatively conservative estimates of official congregations and "underground" flocks that worship without state approval." ³

In Matthew 13.39-43 (The Message), Jesus indicates the climax: "*The harvest is the end of the age . . . (when) ripe, holy lives will mature and adorn the kingdom of their Father.*"

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The Word of God is being spread, and God says, "It shall accomplish all I want it to, and prosper everywhere I send it." Isaiah 55.11 (The Living Bible).

¹ Lausanne Statistics Task Force on Evangelism

² *Time*, September, 2014. Reporter: Hannah Beech

³ *ibidem*.