

## Chapter 1

### Why Bother, Brother?

Oh boy! Just what the world needs—another book on prophecy. There must be a thousand of them already, exploring every theory and nuance of Biblical eschatology. Surely everything that can be said *has* been said.

Perhaps, but with all that's been written, there's a surprisingly broad range of opinion about what it all means. And it isn't terribly hard to see why. The very way the predictions have come down to us invites controversy. Many of them don't seem to make any sense, right up to the moment of their fulfillment, at which point we all nod knowingly and say, "Ah, of course. The prophet described this very thing!"

In some places, the Bible speaks of things yet to come in language that sounds as strange to us as the visions and revelations must have seemed to the Prophets who wrote them down. There were no words in Hebrew or Greek for much of what they saw; they simply did their best to describe it. So we get phrases like "The heaven rolled up like a scroll," or "The moon turned to blood." What does that mean?

In other places, God chooses to present the prophet with a symbol of some future reality, making it obvious from the outset that something else—something more significant—is meant. So Joseph sees sheaves of grain bending over and skinny cows eating fat ones, and he knows God is telling him something important is going to happen. Daniel sees a big statue, and he knows God is revealing truth, not critiquing sculpture.

Sometimes the prophet is told to write things down that he couldn't possibly comprehend. In Psalm 22 for example, King David describes the horrors of a method of execution—crucifixion—that wouldn't even be invented for another five hundred years. Did he know what he was talking about? Not likely. But God did.

Throughout the Bible, God uses prophecy to reveal Himself. If you think about it, foretelling the future is one of the few things the true and living God can do to *prove* his deity. Sure, He demonstrates His power, His love, His mercy all day, every day, in a thousand different ways. But men, fools that we are, have developed an amazing talent for explaining away the obvious handiwork of our Creator. When He tells us what will come to pass, however, He's putting His reputation on the line. He is saying in effect, "Only God, who transcends time, could know what will happen in your future. Because I love you I'm going to tell you what to expect. When it happens exactly as I said it would, it proves you can

trust Me with your soul, too. Then you'll *know* that I am God." When no less a personality than John the Baptist began having doubts about the credentials of Yahshua (Jesus), He proved He was the Messiah by pointing out the *prophecies* he had fulfilled.

You don't see other religions' gods stating the future as if it were a fact because, frankly, it's really embarrassing when their predictions don't come true. Whether God promises to make the prophesied event happen Himself, or is merely predicting it, only the true deity can flawlessly predict the future, because only the true deity exists beyond the bounds of time.

But wait, you say. Other religions besides Judeo-Christianity have "prophets." One in particular, Islam, boasts well over a billion adherents. We'll talk more of Islam later, because it plays a big part in the Bible's revelation of the end of the world as we know it. But let's clear up this little misconception at the outset. Though all of Islam's "prophets" save one (Muhammad) were "borrowed" from the Judeo-Christian scriptures, none of them count, since the Muslim writings flatly contradict everything these prophets—Adam, Noah, Lot, Abraham, Joseph, and even Jesus (if you believe the translations)—had to say. As for its final—in truth, its *only* "prophet," Muhammad never uttered a single prophecy that came to pass. Not one. (He did make one or two prognostications, however. He said that women would outnumber men a hundred to one—wishful thinking, I suppose. And then there was that little prediction about the end of the world, judgment day, coming in 1110 A.D. I'd say he missed that one by just a tad.)

It's really easy to tell people what your god is like and what he wants you to do if you're making him up as you go along, as Muhammad did. For example, when Islam's god ostensibly gave this "prophet" a new revelation permitting him a plethora of wives—when everybody else was limited to a paltry four apiece—Muhammad's child-wife Aisha wryly noted, "Your Lord certainly seems anxious to gratify your desires." Yes indeed, it's one thing to come up with convenient "prophecies" that bestow upon the "prophet" his heart's every desire—sex, money, power, revenge—all of which were bestowed upon Muhammad through timely revelations from his "Lord." It's something else entirely for a prophet to prove his God's deity by relating His flawless grasp of, and control over, future events.

And prophecy is important, especially today. Miracles can be faked. If you don't believe me, show up at your local cinema some Saturday afternoon and watch a blockbuster action movie. I guarantee you'll see things being done that are *impossible*. What you won't see, though, is the miracle of prophecy, someone seriously predicting things like, "Mean old Mrs. Jones is going to get eaten by wild dogs on the front steps of the county courthouse in Pratfall, Kansas, and they won't leave enough corpse to bother burying," only to see it all come true a few

months later. It's not that it's too gory to get a PG-13 rating, you understand, only too hard to predict. After all, mean old Mrs. Jones might get hit by a bus instead, or get eaten by wild dogs outside the K-Mart in Wichita. Or live happily ever after, for that matter.

You want reality? God, through His prophet Elijah, predicted that something very similar would happen to mean old Mrs. Ahab, a.k.a. Israel's Queen Jezebel, and the prophecy came about precisely as he'd foretold it, in all its bloody detail. (see II Kings 9:10, 30-37) And that was an easy one. Some of the Bible's prophecies—already fulfilled, mind you—are so complex and unlikely they'll make your head swim.

As a matter of fact, at least a quarter of the Bible was prophetic when it was written. That's a chunk of text roughly the size of the New Testament, all speaking of things that hadn't happened yet, *future history*, so to speak. Over five hundred specific prophecies have already come to pass. That leaves an ever-shrinking list yet to be fulfilled. Many of them must have seemed like the ravings of mystic lunatics when they were handed down; yet as the years pass they're beginning to sound more like the observations of calm and objective reporters writing articles for today's—or maybe tomorrow's—newspapers. Where it used to take faith in large doses to believe in God's prophecies, now it only takes an open mind and a decent grasp of current events.

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But like I said, there must be a thousand books on end-time prophecy already. What possible reason could there be for writing another one?

I can't say I've read everything there is on the subject, but the scores of books I have read invariably fall into one of three camps. First are the surface treatments, those thin volumes intended for Christians new to the subject or new to the faith. Because they're meant to be introductions or overviews, they rarely do more than help the reader get his feet wet, and by their very nature ask him to swallow their message whole—to take it or leave it, the inevitable speculation and interpretation along with the concrete Biblical fact.

The second category is comprised of those weighty and erudite tomes that dig deep and explain everything in excruciating detail. I must confess I love this stuff, dense as it is. Written by respected and dedicated scholars with legendary names like Walvoord, Pentecost, and Ryrie, these tend to examine the trees under a microscope, leaving the forest more or less incomprehensible to us mortals. I

thank God that these men understand the Bible so well. Now if I could only understand *them*...

And then there are the special-agenda books, those with an axe to grind or an issue to explore. You've seen them. They defend to the death their position on a pre-tribulation vs. post-tribulation rapture, or vice versa, or their stance on pre-millennialism vs. post-millennialism vs. a-millennialism. Or perhaps the author wants to explore numerology—hidden Biblical codes—the Mid-East oil situation, Islamic terrorism, or his current theory on who the Antichrist might be. These have gotten quite popular of late.

All of these approaches can be valuable in their own way, but what I keep hearing from my friends and family is “Yes, but I still don't get it. What happens? Why? When? There are too many theories and not enough concrete fact, too much data and not enough usable information.” I'm convinced that the “usable information” is available between the covers of the Bible, if only we're willing to dig for it, and the answers that aren't there are either beside the point or hidden for our own good.

God has told us far more than most of us realize. What will happen to the Church in the Last Days? What's on the horizon for Israel, America, Europe, and the Orient? How does the scourge of Islam figure into all of this? Why will World War III start, and how will it end? Who will fight World War IV, when, and why? All of this is explained—not only the bare facts but also the reasons these events will occur. Many people today are familiar with the buzzwords of prophecy: terms like Rapture, Tribulation, Antichrist, Armageddon, Millennium, and Judgment Day. But few realize the depth of detail with which God has predicted the coming events. Christians glance at Jesus' declaration that “**of that day and hour no one knows**” (Matthew 24:36) and shrug their shoulders, concluding that the timing must all be a big mystery. Almost no one realizes that God has told us precisely—to the day—when He would begin His Millennial reign, when the Antichrist would take over the earth, when the Great Tribulation would begin, and a plethora of similar Last Days milestones. The only thing we're *not* told is the date of the rapture (the event to which Jesus was referring), and even then, we *are* told the day on which it will fall, just not the year. We've also been given a scriptural thermometer so we can tell when we're getting warm. It was no pointless fluke that God revealed these events to His apostles and prophets, who wrote them down for our edification. He *wants* us to know what will happen, just as He wants us to know what happened in the past. Judeo-Christianity is the only faith on earth that has a foothold in history, both past and future.

As for me, I find that strangely comforting. Strangely, because what's coming is terrifying, almost too horrible to contemplate. It will make the killing fields of the twentieth century seem trivial by comparison. Billions will die. We will come

within an inch of witnessing the destruction of all life on this fragile planet. But I *am* comforted, because I know how it all ends. Christ's victorious return saves the day....

Okay, I'll come clean. I'm comforted because I don't expect to be here when all the nastiness happens—I'll be raptured, if I don't die first. Considering my age, I give rapture a 50/50 chance. That's a guess, of course, but one I've been led to by a truckload of scriptural evidence, evidence that dovetails nicely when you lay it all out in front of you.

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There's an obscure old James Taylor song whose lyrics have haunted me for years. One of the verses says, "We've got the Holy Scriptures here that prove us to be right in believing out loud what we wish to be true...." A very astute observation, James. Christians have made a contact sport of taking Bible passages out of context and using them as a club with which to beat our heathen neighbors—as well as our less-enlightened brothers and sisters—over the head. Our arrogance can truly be a thing of wonder sometimes. On the other hand, we are told to "search the scriptures," to "test the spirits," to guard against false teaching and heresy. Is there a contradiction here? Not really. Digging out the truth and standing upon it isn't at all the same thing as ferreting out isolated texts to prove what "we wish to be true." There are two keys to this conundrum, besides Paul's "speaking-the-truth-in-love" admonition. The first is paying attention to context: who is speaking to whom, when, where, and why. The second is taking "the whole counsel of God."

That's the tough one when you're exploring prophecy. Like I said, a significant chunk of the Bible was prophetic when it was written, and there's still quite a lot that has yet to be fulfilled. What's a writer to do? Copy down and explore every shred of scripture that seems to have a bearing on future events? That would take *forever*, and you'd end up with a book so big, no fiscally responsible publisher would touch with a ten-cubit pole. It's the 21<sup>st</sup> century, already. Anything over three hundred pages is *death!*

Actually, that's precisely what I've set out to do here. Oops.

Most everybody knows about Revelation—*Apocalypse Then*. I can say without hesitation that Chapters 4 through 22 of John's remarkable vision form the core of yet-to-be-fulfilled prophetic scripture. And as John himself writes at the very beginning of this remarkable book, "**Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time**

is near.” (Revelation 1:3) Christians and Jews are often conversant with the book of Daniel as well, written in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. during the Babylonian captivity. It too contains keys to prophetic interpretation that we cannot do without. The third most well-known passage is the Olivet Discourse (so called because it was delivered upon Jerusalem’s Mount of Olives). Recorded in all three synoptic Gospels, this conversation between Yahshua and four of his disciples gives us valuable information that’s stated nowhere else in scripture.

But the story of what is about to happen to our world is spread throughout the entire Bible. There are references—some subtle, some blatant—to the events yet to come in all but four books of the Old Testament, Ezra, Esther, Song of Solomon, and Jonah. But Esther is all about the preservation of the Jewish race and nation, a central pillar of Biblical eschatology, Jonah is a poignant and pointed treatise on how God tempers judgment with mercy (not to mention being a clear prophetic metaphor of Yahshua’s first-century advent), and the Song of Solomon might well turn out to be far more prophetically significant than it looks on the surface. All but two books in the New Testament (Philemon and III John) contain last-days prophecy as well. Some of these are out-and-out predictions, some are types—pictures or precursors of future realities—and some are historical or theological tidbits that help explain what the prophecies predict. But it is abundantly clear that if we restrict our knowledge of God’s future plan to a few well-known passages, we will not only misinterpret the big picture, but also miss the details that bring it all into focus. God told us this stuff for a reason. We cheat ourselves if we’re too lazy to look at *all* of what He has to say.

The subject is like a big jigsaw puzzle. There are thousands of pieces, and many of them look quite similar. To make a complete picture, we need to have all the pieces, fitting them together one by one. As every jigsaw puzzle worker knows, you can’t trim the pieces to make them fit your own plan, you can’t substitute one piece for another, you can’t repaint the pieces, and you can’t leave any of them out if you want to have a complete, comprehensible picture when you’re finished. There is only one correct position for each piece. If it’s not where it’s supposed to be, it only adds to the confusion.

I have become convinced that we *can* discern what God wants us to know about the future. The jigsaw puzzle before us, however, is like one of those hazy Monet jobs—you know: even when it’s all put together correctly, it’s still a bit fuzzy in places. We won’t see everything in detail; sometimes we’ll just get an impression. Maybe we’ll see a fellow in a rowboat on a pond, but we won’t know his name, or Social Security number, or hat size. But we don’t have to in order to appreciate the artistry—or the significance—of the scene. We’re seeing all the Artist intended for us to see. It is enough. We must look at the finished picture through the eyes of faith, accepting the fact that He has shown us exactly what we

need to know—no more, no less—if only we’re willing to use our eyes. But since “**faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,**” (Hebrews 11:1) we can and should adjust our lives based on what He has revealed in the prophetic picture. Just because it hasn’t happened yet, we shouldn’t assume it’s not real.

I’ll confess, though, we’ve got another problem. The pieces to our puzzle have not been put away neatly. No, they’re in the same big box with half a dozen other puzzles. And worse (or better, as the case may be) they’re all pictures by the same Artist, and employ the same brushstroke technique, the same color palette, the same *style*. But because I know you really want to work this puzzle, I’ve gone through the whole big box—the Bible—and picked out all of the pieces that seem to fit this picture. I may have missed one or two (or three), but I’m sure I got most of them. If you see any holes when you’re finished, go back to the box and search for the missing pieces yourself. Trust me; it’s a rewarding experience.

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Before we begin, we need to discuss the ground rules. There are a few baseline assumptions I’ve made in this study that have a direct bearing on the conclusions I’ve come to. I won’t apologize for them, but I need to explain them.

First, I intend to take as a “given” that there is a Creator-Deity, and His self-revealed name is Yahweh. He has revealed His plan to us in His scriptures. I am of the opinion that the Bible was without error as its inspired writers—some forty of them—put quill to parchment. But as time passed, changes in language and customs conspired to rob us of the nuances of meaning that originally permeated the sacred texts. And the problem was multiplied when they were translated into other languages. Therefore, although I firmly believe that “**the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever,**” (Isaiah 40:8) and although we undoubtedly have more than the solid gist of God’s intended communication to us, we no longer possess the complete and unabridged oracles of Yahweh. We don’t have fresh-squeezed revelation any more; we’ll have to make do with frozen concentrate—just add water, or Spirit as the case may be. And that’s okay. It’s still mighty tasty. Much of what we’ve lost in transmission has been compensated for in redundancy: God invariably tells us the really important stuff dozens of times, in dozens of different ways.

Second, the plain meaning of the words of Scripture will be our primary guide as we explore this pile of puzzle pieces—our *primary* guide, but not our only one. If a word or phrase begs for elucidation, we’ll dig deeper.

At the risk of alienating half of you at the outset, I would characterize this approach as “literalist,” though not “hyper-literalist.” We need to come to grips with the fact that the Biblical writers often used metaphor and hyperbole to make their point, just as we do today. But through translation and cultural shifts, these turns of phrase often lose their impact, leaving us with nothing but the “literal” meaning, which is not what the Author meant to say at all.

Because it’s important, I’d like to give you an example, an obscure but telling glimpse at how a hyper-literal approach can cloud our understanding. In Ezekiel 38, the prophet is describing the build-up of a major end-times battle. He says, **“Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, ‘Have you come to take plunder...?’”**

Who are these people? We know *where* they were. Sheba and Dedan were on the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula, and Tarshish was located near Gibraltar, in Southern Spain. (Remember Jonah’s little encounter with the big fish? He was headed for Tarshish, which was about as far west as you could go in his day.) So the Ezekiel passage obviously means that Saudi Arabia and Spain will be making diplomatic protestations, right? Not exactly. Factor in II Chronicles 20:35-37: **“After this, Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly. And he allied himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish, and they made the ships in Ezion Geber. But Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, ‘Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, Yahweh has destroyed your works.’ Then the ships were wrecked, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.”**

So what? Jehoshaphat doesn’t get to cruise the Med. Big deal. No, look closer. Ezion Geber was where Eliat is today, at the Southern tip of Israel, where it meets the Gulf of Aqaba. You can’t *get* to Spain, or anywhere in the Mediterranean, from there in a boat without circumnavigating the continent of Africa, and that’s something nobody even attempted for another 2,000 years.

A mistake? No, a metaphor. Tarshish, a real, literal, place, had become a metaphor for “commerce,” or “business.” We use a similar term today. When we say “Wall Street,” we don’t necessarily mean a road in Manhattan, though there is such a road, but rather a system of commerce, or even the greed that drives it. So Ezekiel seems to be saying that the world’s financial interests and those who control the world’s biggest oil reserves will get *real* nervous when Gog (the “you” in the passage quoted above) and his allies make their move. That’s the nature of metaphor within a literalist interpretation.

Some say there may be a deeper, mystical meaning to many of the passages we’ll explore, perhaps some esoteric message latent in Gematria number codes or ELS—Equidistant Letter Sequences. I only know five things for sure. First, no matter what’s buried beneath the surface, the plain meaning of the words is

primarily what God intended for us to have and understand. Second, any hidden meanings that Yahweh meant to put there will support, not contradict, the actual text. Third, if you're clever, you can demonstrate almost anything you want with hidden Biblical codes. Fourth, these obscure formulas may be of some value in confirming the truth of scripture but they're worthless as tools for predicting future events. And fifth, even if those hidden meanings are there, I'm not smart enough to figure them out. You're on your own in that department.

The third ground rule is my use of Biblical quotations. I am not a Hebrew or Greek scholar, and chances are you aren't either. So we're stuck with English, a moving target at best; an imprecise and misleading cauldron of linguistic bouillabaisse at worst. My primary choice of translation is by necessity a compromise between word-for-word literalism and thought-for-thought interpolation, and it admittedly falls short of the mark in places: except where noted, I have used the New King James Version, which—the scholars insist—is as faithful to the actual text as any popular English translation, without subjecting the reader to a relic of the English language that no longer exists outside of church buildings and Shakespearian repertory theater. That being said, I promise to keep my trusty Hebrew and Greek dictionaries handy. We're going to need them.

You'll note that I've provided the text of each passage. You may be wondering why I've gone to all the trouble, when I could have just given you the reference. Two reasons. First, I want to ensure that the actual words are available. Far too often, false doctrines are promulgated upon a misreading of a passage (e.g., "Money is the root of all evil" is *not* what was said). Second, I *know* you won't look 'em up. How do I know? Because I don't usually look 'em up either—not at that very moment, anyway, and that's what counts. When I provide only a Scripture reference, either it's a side issue, it's something we've covered previously, or the verse is directly parallel to a passage just quoted—the same thought recorded, for example, in both Kings and Chronicles or Matthew and Luke.

I have made a few formatting changes from the New King James text, none of which change the meaning one bit. I have put the "poetic" passages into straight text, to save space if nothing else. Rhyme and meter are not the essence of Hebrew poetry anyway. I have eliminated individual verse numbers within a passage. I find them distracting. But I have, of course, provided an overall reference for each quote. Also, the New King James retains the KJV practice of putting supplied words (those whose presence is implied but not actually there in the original) in italics. I have put everything in straight text. If you feel the need to know which words were supplied for clarity, or where one verse ends and another begins, I encourage you to check your own Bible. Bear in mind that the original

texts had neither capitals, italics, nor punctuation. (The Hebrew texts didn't even have *vowels*.) Nor did they have verse numbering or chapter breaks.

I have also made one significant translation correction: Most English versions, including The New King James, substitute the proper name of God with a title, rendering it "The LORD." But the original Hebrew text reads "YHWH" (יהוה reading from right to left: Y=yod; H=he; W=waw; H=he), which is His own self-revealed name, meaning "I Am," i.e., the One who is self-existent. (The name of the Canaanite god Ba'al meant "The LORD," for cryin' out loud!) In the interests of coming to know this deity who desired to have a personal relationship with us so much that he used His own personal name 7,000 times in scripture (of which only 6,868 survived the tampering of the Masorete scribes), I have undone what I consider to be a grievous error on the part of the translators, spelling God's name with the supplied vowels, "Yahweh," to make it possible to pronounce. (Actually, the correct pronunciation is more like "Yah-oo-way." Refer to <http://yahweh.org/publications/sny/sn09Chap.pdf> for a full explanation.)

You may think I'm being overly picky here. What's so wrong about referring to God with an exalted title such as "The LORD?" Nothing much, except for the little fact that Yahweh hates it. He *wants us* to use His name: **"How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal."** (Jeremiah 23:26-27) Do you see what He's saying here? How did we forget God's name? We replaced it with a title, The LORD. What does "Baal" mean? The LORD. So I, for one, have repented from calling Yahweh "the LORD," although I most certainly *want* Him to be my lord, my master, in the sense of being my exalted Father whom I endeavor to revere and obey. I am confident that I have not offended my God in doing so; I am convinced, rather, that having people refuse to use His name out of willful ignorance or feigned obeisance is far more offensive to Him.

Also, even though the whole western world and every popular English Bible translation calls the Messiah "Jesus," I have taken the liberty of using His *real* name, the name his mother called Him: Yahshua (alternately pronounced Yahushua. The often-used short forms, Y'shua, Yeshua, or Yahsu, are corruptions which disguise the meaning of the Name). Yahshua means "Yahweh is salvation." The English word "Jesus" is not a translation; it is a transliteration of a transliteration, and it has lost every shred of its original meaning.

How did we get from point A (Yahshua) to point C (Jesus)? The standard reference books will tell you that there are several forms of the word translated "Jesus" in the New Testament, and they're all singular, masculine nouns. (There's an important glitch in the textual evidence that throws the Greek words into question, but let's ignore it for just a moment.) In Greek, as in most languages,

nouns (including names) must agree in case, number, and gender with the adjectives that modify them. The word we know as “Jesus” is found in five different cases in the New Testament, three of which share the same form; the remaining two have different endings.

Ἰησοῦ (pronounced E-áy-sū) is in the genitive case, which denotes description, possession, or relationship.

Ἰησοῦ (E-áy-sū). The second case (which looks like the genitive) is dative, used when its nouns or pronouns have the function of an indirect object. The vocative case (the case of address) also takes this same Greek form.

Ἰησοῦν (E-áy-soon). The accusative case sounds a little different. There are six distinct types, but basically, they function as the direct object of the verb.

The last form is Ἰησοῦς (E-áy-soos), the nominative case (used where the subject is producing the action). There are five separate nominative types.

As complicated as all this may look, the reality is far worse. Greek is extremely complicated, and is therefore capable of transmitting quite subtle nuances of meaning. Unlike English, however, Greek nouns, pronouns, and adjectives—including names—don’t stay put. As we have seen, they change to fit the case, gender, and number of the sentence. But the lexical form of a noun or adjective—i.e., the form found in a lexicon or Greek dictionary—is *always* the nominative singular form, in this instance Ἰησοῦς (E-áy-soos). Hence the alternate forms Ἰησοῦ (E-áy-sū) and Ἰησοῦν (E-áy-soon), as well as other possible forms, would never show up in standard reference works like Strong’s or Thayer’s.

Note therefore: (1) The genitive, dative, and vocative case of the Greek word rendered “Jesus” in our English texts, Ἰησοῦ (Iesou, pronounced E-áy-sū), is about as good a transliteration of the short form of Yahshua, “Yahsu,” as you can get in Greek, and makes for a passable transliteration in Latin as well: “Iesu.” In Greek, the final “ah” syllable of “Yahshua” would never appear because the case designation would be lost. Note also that there is no “Y” sound in Koine Greek, nor is there a “sh” sound. (2) The nominative form Ἰησοῦς (Iesous, pronounced E-áy-soos) is the obvious origin of the transliteration that eventually emerged in English, “Jesus.” The Latin “I” transformed over time into a “hard I” and only later into the new letter “J”. As a matter of fact, the Authorized version of the English Bible (a.k.a. the King James Version) used the name “Iesus” from 1611 through 1628; “Jesus” did not appear until the 1629 edition, and we’re not positive how *that* was pronounced. Considering the drift of pronunciation modes of European languages, especially the ambivalent use of “J” versus “Y” sounds in Germanic and Scandinavian tongues, it could have been pronounced Yesus as easily as Jesus. The transformation therefore seems natural and logical: Yahshua...to Ἰησοῦς (E-áy-soos)...to Iesu/Jesu (Latin)...to Iesus... to Jesus.

But as I warned you, there's a rub, a textual convention that was employed to render the Savior's name and other key words in all of the earliest Greek parchments. As arcane as what follows may seem, you should be aware of it, for it affects the very heart of our standard Christian vocabulary.

We now possess some seventy manuscripts of portions of the Greek New Testament that date before the time of Constantine—pre-fourth century. And *not a single one* of them spells out Yahshua's name—the Ἰησοῦ, Ἰησοῦν or Ἰησοῦς we find in later texts. Instead, the Name is *always* represented by a placeholder: two Greek capital letters with a line scribed over the top (indicating that these are not regular words), and apparently keyed to the case. So what would eventually be written Ἰησοῦς was indicated as ΙΣ (Iota-Sigma), Ἰησοῦν was penned as ΙΝ (Iota-Nu) and Ἰησοῦ was written ΙΥ (Iota-Upsilon), each with a horizontal line above it, and each (in its own case) meaning Yahshua—Jesus.

Actually, there are seven key words in the New Covenant scriptures that were consistently handled the same way in all the pre-Constantine Greek manuscripts—translated Jesus, Christ, Spirit, Holy, God, Lord, Father, and Son. All of them seem to be a code or abbreviation for the Greek word they replace, words that would be spelled out in post-Constantine manuscripts (for example, ΚΣ for *Kurios* was translated “Lord”). I'm not absolutely sure why this was done. “Yahshua” couldn't be correctly pronounced in Greek, and if spoken in certain circles it could get you stoned because it contained the divine name Yah. But others suffered no such handicaps to communication. The verbal ideas they represent, however, are invariably critical to our understanding of Yahweh and His plan of redemption. Perhaps we would be safer using the Hebrew words for these fundamental concepts (e.g. *Ruach* in place of *Pneuma* for Spirit) than their rough Greek equivalents. At the very least, we should ponder why the original Greek Renewed-Covenant texts universally employed this place-holder code, and contemplate why the code was replaced by the pagan-compromised Church of Rome under Constantine and his successors.

Some sources perceive a conspiratorial pagan undercurrent in our use of the word “Jesus.” Lew White of [www.fossilizedcustoms.com](http://www.fossilizedcustoms.com), for example, says, “To try to make it mean something in Greek, the ending ‘sus’ definitely refers to Zeus, as it does in many other Greek names such as *Tarsus*, *Pegasus*, *Dionysus*, and *Parnassus*. So, in Greek, the Name ‘Jesus’ can mean ‘hail Zeus,’ or ‘son of Zeus.’” I'm having trouble swallowing this argument whole (although Mr. White is correct about many other things). In Greek, the name Zeus would be spelled using the diphthong epsilon-epsilon (Ζεϋς), not omicron-epsilon (ου). And as we've seen, the ending of names in Greek change form, depending on the case. Thus the similarity in sound is purely incidental, and the pagan connection is non-existent (I hope).

I'm not discounting the obvious fact that Satan would like to cloud our understanding of who Yahshua is and what His name means. Or failing that, slip in a ringer: some have noticed a phonetic similarity between "Jesus" and the name of the obscure and ancient Druid/Teutonic god "Gesus," the "horned one." To my mind, this merely shows that there's nothing holy that Satan can't attempt to corrupt or counterfeit. For all I know, our use of the name "Jesus" *is* part of a nefarious satanic plot designed to trick us into worshipping a false Norse god, though Yahweh knows where our hearts are. It seems more likely to me that it is the inevitable—and innocent—result of transliterating the name of our Messiah from Aramaic into Greek, and transliterating *that* into English (via Latin). Unlike words like "Easter" with clearly pagan roots (Astarte...Ishtar...Easter), or perfectly good English words like "gay" that have been pressed into service in Satan's cause, changing their meaning completely, "Jesus" is a word I do not intend to strike from my vocabulary. However, I still prefer the more direct and meaningful "Yahshua," and intend to use it in conversation whenever my audience might be expected to understand Who I mean—and more to the point, I will be using it throughout this book: the One we're used to calling Jesus is "Yahshua."

Enough said. Let's move on. Ground rule number four: since this is a book about eschatology—the study of Last Things—we need to establish rules of prophetic interpretation. Fortunately, the Bible and secular history have pretty much done this for us. So much prophecy has already been fulfilled—literally, I might add—we have a built-in guide for figuring out that which hasn't yet come to pass. Still, when John says he saw stinging locusts that looked like horses, with golden crowns, hair like women's, and teeth like lions', we don't know precisely what he meant. What will those who encounter these critters actually see? Suffice it to say that those who are familiar with John's account will be able to say with all truthfulness, "Yes, I recognize that," though I suspect their actual responses will be somewhat more colorful. At any rate, I will devote a chapter to exploring how Biblical predictions can be expected to correlate to their realities—based on prophecies that have already been fulfilled.

Fifth, one of my pet peeves with books on this subject is the practice of stating theories as if they were fact. We are not in a position to be dogmatic about the interpretation of some things that are alluded to in Scripture, puzzle pieces that the Artist has painted with indistinct, impressionistic brushstrokes. Yet to ignore them for lack of clarity or concrete evidence is to ignore the very Word of God. Therefore, I would like to introduce a timely innovation, my very own speculation scale. If I see a solution to a sticky prophetic problem, one that is admittedly a guess on my part but plausible nevertheless, I will assign a Speculation Factor to it. This is a scale of one to ten, *one* meaning I'm practically certain about it, and *ten* meaning it's a wild—but possible—idea precipitated by pepperoni pizza and

sleep deprivation. Thus, SF4 (Speculation Factor 4) means I think the idea may have merit, but it's by no means certain, and SF8 means my solution is just a theory—I only mention it to get you thinking outside the box. Speculative or not, however, I will endeavor not to propose any schemes that clearly contradict the facts as I see them presented in Scripture. And bear in mind that if we aren't given a clear picture about something, then whatever it is we're considering is probably not crucial to our eternal destiny or our daily walk with God.

Sixth, I have not attempted to deal with things that don't bear directly upon the unfolding of Biblical prophecy as we approach the end of the age. It isn't that these things are insignificant, only that they're beyond the scope of this book. Actually, I think the issues of salvation and Godly living are more important for us today. But tomorrow is approaching like a freight train. Since Yahweh went to all the trouble of predicting it, the least we can do is study what He had to say. (Actually, there are hundreds of points of contact between prophecy and the doctrines of sanctification and justification anyway. The Bible is one big story—one Author, one plot, one agenda—and the ending is to die for.)

Seventh, and this is very important, please maintain a mental distinction between my words and God's. I have made that easy to do: the Biblical Scripture in this book is **printed in a different font, like this**. God's words (accurately translated, anyway) can be trusted; mine must be taken with a grain of salt. I do not purport to have all the answers, and I certainly can't pretend to be inerrant in my commentary. This book is intended to be a tool, a handy reference guide to all of the Bible's prophecies, in quasi-chronological order, that remain unfulfilled as we cruise into the new millennium. But I am not alone when I look around and come to the conclusion that we are very, very close to the end of the beginning—that fulcrum of destiny separating time from eternity.