



## **Advanced Study AS008: Prophecy 2: Predictive Prophecy**

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### **Read Amos 3:7-8**

**Introduction.** Prophecies in the Old Testament were not always about the future, but prophecies given to address contemporary needs often had a prophetic relevance to future events (see Advanced Study AS007, paragraph 1). The certainty and clarity of the predictions varied, according to the subject and conditions.

**1. The Prophetic Perfect.** This is the term given by theologians to prophecies spoken in the past or present tense as though the event had already taken place. A well-known example is in Isaiah 9:6 – *Unto us a child is born* – though the child would not be born until seven centuries later. What events were prophesied in the following passages: Isaiah 5:13 (KJV or NKJV); Isaiah 10:28-32; Amos 5:2? Do you think the use of this Hebrew idiom has anything to do with the certainty of fulfilment felt by the prophet?

**2. Prophetic Timing.** Seldom did prophecies indicate a time of fulfilment. Events that were prophesied as though taking place close in time, or even simultaneously, might take place or will take place centuries apart. The phenomenon has been compared to viewing a range of mountains, each representing a historical event, with other, lower, mountains (events) in between the peaks and unseen by the observer, making the visible peaks appear closer together. This will be more easily understood by viewing the diagram *The Landscape View of Prophecy* in the Appendix to this Study, ref AS008a. Look at the diagram and see if you can identify where two events might appear in prophecy to be simultaneous, or closer than they might appear. You might like to guess at some of the 'hidden peaks' that were unseen by the prophets.

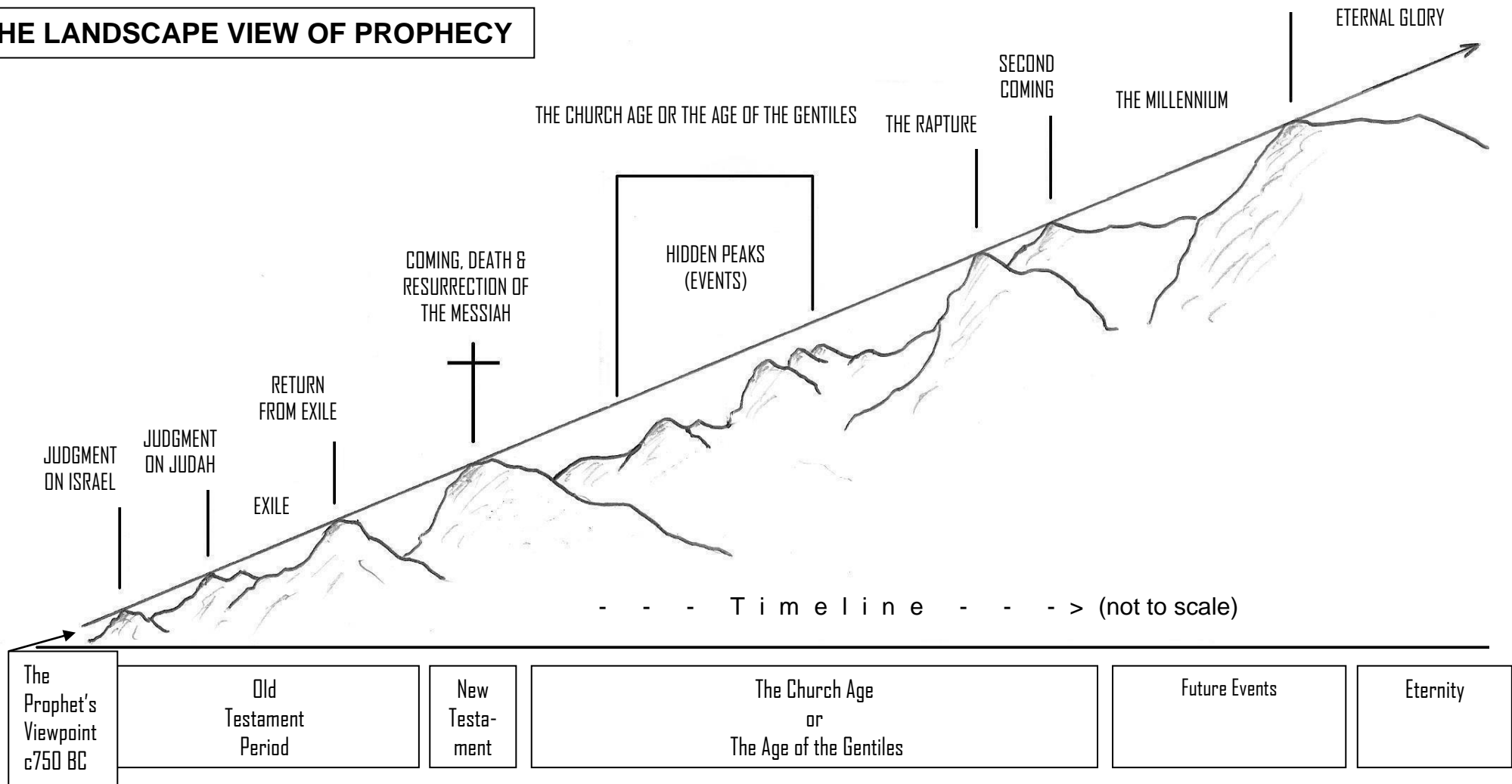
**3. Progressive Fulfilment.** Prophecies might be partially fulfilled by one event, then fulfilled in greater measure some years later. Prophecies of Restoration for Judah's exiles were fulfilled in and around 538 BC, but the idyllic conditions described will not come to pass until God establishes a new heaven and a new earth.

**4. Conditional Prophecies.** We looked at these briefly in the previous Study (AS007, Paragraph 1). Most prophecies were delivered to wayward people and carried warnings along the lines of "Change your behaviour or else you will fall foal of God's judgment." Can you think of an instance in which God withheld judgment on a city because the citizens listened to the prophet's message and repented, much to the chagrin of the prophet? What does this tell us about God as the Divine Judge?

**To Think About:** From what you know about the principles of prophecy, how can you balance certainty about the fulfilment of prophecies as yet unfulfilled with caution about the details of their fulfilment?

**For Further Study:** Read about prophecy in a Bible Dictionary or Bible Encyclopaedia.

**THE LANDSCAPE VIEW OF PROPHECY**



The origin of this illustration is unknown. I gratefully received it from the Rev'd D.B.P. Smith, former Old Testament Tutor of Birmingham Bible Institute.