

Do God's Prophecies Always Come True?

Many mainstream denominations have the following basic belief: "Whenever God gives us a prophesy, that prophesy is *guaranteed* to come true - *exactly* as it was stated." In other words, the belief is that God's prophecies *always* come true - *regardless* of what humans do.

From what I have seen, the above belief appears to stem from the idea of a completely "sovereign" God - i.e., the idea that God is explicitly *controlling* each and every event that occurs on the earth.

In any case, the question is: is the above belief supported by Scripture? In other words, is it really true that *every single time* God gives us a prophesy, that prophesy *always* comes true as it was stated?

Here are three very specific prophecies that God gave to His prophets. Let's examine Scripture, to determine what those prophecies state - and to see if they came true or not.

Jonah 3:1-4 (NIV):

¹ Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." ³ Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. ⁴ On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned."

Jeremiah 34:4-5 (NIV):

⁴ Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the LORD concerning you: "You shall not die by the sword. ⁵You shall die in peace. And as spices were burned for your fathers, the former kings who were before you, so people shall burn spices for you and lament for you, saying, "Alas, lord!" For I have spoken the word, declares the LORD."

2 Kings 20:1 (NIV):

¹ In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover."

In the first prophesy, God states that in forty days, Nineveh will be destroyed. In the second prophesy, God tells us that Zedekiah will die peacefully; i.e., he will die in his bed, with his country at peace. Finally, in the third prophesy, God states that Hezekiah will *not* recover from his illness; he will die from it.

Now, let's find out if those prophecies came true or not:

Jonah 3:5-10 (NIV):

⁵ The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

⁶ When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. ⁷ Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh:

"By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. ⁸ But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up

their evil ways and their violence. ⁹ Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

¹⁰ When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

Jeremiah 34:17,21-22 (NIV):

¹⁷ "Therefore, this is what the LORD says: You have not obeyed me; you have not proclaimed freedom for your fellow countrymen. So I now proclaim 'freedom' for you, declares the LORD - 'freedom' to fall by the sword, plague and famine. I will make you abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth.

²¹ "I will hand Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials over to their enemies who seek their lives, to the army of the king of Babylon, which has withdrawn from you. ²² I am going to give the order, declares the LORD, and I will bring them back to this city. They will fight against it, take it and burn it down. And I will lay waste the towns of Judah so no one can live there."

2 Kings 20:2-7 (NIV):

² Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, ³ "Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

⁴ Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: ⁵ "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, 'This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the LORD. ⁶ I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.' "

⁷ Then Isaiah said, "Prepare a poultice of figs." They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.

In each of the above three cases, the prophesies that God stated did **not** come true! The reason for this is that in each case, people *changed* their behavior, *after* the prophesy was given.

In the case of the Ninevites and Hezekiah, people turned *toward* God - i.e., they did what God wanted them to do. In the case of Zedekiah, he turned *away* from God - he did things that God disapproved of.

As a result, in the case of the Ninevites and Hezekiah, God changed His decision for the better - He did not destroy Nineveh, and He caused Hezekiah to recover, and live 15 more years. In the case of Zedekiah, God changed His decision for the worse - He caused Zedekiah to be taken prisoner by the Babylonians, and caused Judah to be destroyed.

Overall, the above examples (plus many others) tell me the following:

In at least *some* cases, our actions can influence God's decisions!

In fact, God *explicitly* told Jeremiah that people's actions can cause Him to change His decisions:

Jeremiah 18:1-10 (NIV):

¹ This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD : ² “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” ³ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

⁵ Then the word of the LORD came to me: ⁶ “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. ⁷ If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, ⁸ and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. ⁹ And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, ¹⁰ and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

There are somewhat similar passages listed in the New Testament; passages that indicate that our actions can influence God’s decisions:

John 15:5-8 (NIV):

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Philippians 4:4-9 (NIV):

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

James 4:7-10 (NIV):

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

In my view, the above information is *extremely* important - because if our actions have the ability to influence God’s decisions, that should definitely motivate us to follow God!