

Judgment on America? *Two Book Reviews on Prophecy*

By Herb Drake, House Church Central, September 2020

While most Christians probably don't take prophecy very seriously, assuming that prophecy stopped at the end of the New Testament era, the crescendo of growing problems in finance, social unrest, pandemics, contentious politics, and the presence of "climate change," "social justice," "deep state," and "fake news," in the modern lexicon have brought prophecy back into the center for many believers, prompting new books on the subject.

Two recent books of this nature take completely different approaches to prophecy but converge on a common conclusion. Deciding which book to read probably depends on one's worldview:

- Jonathan Cahn applies ancient (Old Testament) prophecies against Israel to contemporary America in his books *The Harbinger* and *The Harbinger II*.
- Michael Snyder catalogs the prophecies of many contemporary believers in his *Lost Prophecies of the Future of America*.

Jonathan Cahn's *Harbinger* Books

Rev. Cahn's two *Harbinger* books should be read in sequence. They share a premise based on the inaugural prayer of George Washington¹ on the date of the founding of the United States that parallels the prayer that of Solomon upon the founding of the temple.² Everything in these books flow from that premise, which makes the author's task one of exposing facts that validate that premise and to then recover ancient Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in ancient Israel and re-fulfilled in America. This includes times of blessing, times of warning, and times of judgment.

The facts that Cahn puts on the table are remarkable, so his work needs to be taken seriously—especially because Israel's rejection of God's warning eventually led to its destruction. Because the book is fact based and well documented with ample footnotes, it will appeal to readers inclined to accept inductive reasoning. Others may only see a long list of extraordinary coincidences. The principle prophecy of the books is Isaiah 9:10 which was cited but fatally misunderstood by public figures on September 11 and on various other days by others memorizing that event. Also millions had their *One Year Bible* open on the September 11 page, which included Isaiah 9:10, while watching the event on TV.³

The *Harbinger* books are well documented with ample footnotes. Therefore one cannot really argue with the facts⁴ that Cahn presents, which fall into several categories, three of which appear below:

¹ https://www.usaheritage.org/wash_prayer1.html.

² 2 Chronicles 7:12-16.

³ *The One Year Bible: Arranged in 365 Daily Readings*. Wheaton, Tyndale House, 1985.

⁴ Fact checking did find a few problems. First, the dating of Henry Hudson's discovery of Manhattan on September 11, 1609 is problematic, the actual date differing among various sources and the question of whether the date recorded used the Julian or Gregorian calendar, which differed by 10 days in 1609. Secondly, over 3000 engineers and architects reject the official NIST report that concluded that two aircraft caused the demolition of the three steel-reinforced sky-scrapers; complaining that the official report suppressed evidence that explosives had been installed in the structures weeks or months earlier (www.ae911truth.org) by people wishing to inflame public opinion about becoming involved in Middle Eastern wars. Cahn accepts the official report's controversial conclusion that Muslim terrorists were solely responsible.

- Multiple significant events falling on particular days of the year (e.g., September 11).
- Multiple event anniversaries separated by a given number of years (e.g., 19 years).
- Parallels between pre-exilic Israel's ancient history and the history of America.

Through a fictional narrative between an author and a mysterious individual called "the Prophet," these books connect dots between factual events and Cahn's interpretations of their relationship. His conclusion is that America has received "shakings," especially the falling of the buildings on September 11, 2001, which are intended to warn the country that it needs to return to the godly ways promised by Washington in his prayer when the nation was launched at Ground Zero,⁵ and that there will be consequences if it fails to do so just as Israel was destroyed when they received and ignored Isaiah's warning.

Promise and Fulfillment

There is a solid theological foundation that supports Cahn's work called "Promise and Fulfillment." An ancient prophecy is fulfilled in its own time, but there may be further fulfillments at future times. Cahn's book asserts that Isaiah 9:10 is such a prophecy, showing that was cited in American speeches and publications multiple times on and after September 11, 2001, but was not understood as the warning that it was. Instead, God got an arrogant response of "we will rebuild it stronger without your help." Therefore, God has been removing his protection and blessings from America and which is on track to suffer the same fate as ancient Israel.

Either Rev. Cahn's approach is valid and we are on the receiving end of some very dour divine warnings, or Cahn just found an amazing list of mind-blowing coincidences. His facts can be proved, but not his conclusions. Therefore the credibility Cahn's thesis depends whether the worldview of his readers accept inductive reasoning⁶ and whether they believe that God is active in our world.

Michael Snyder's *Lost Prophecies*

Paul discusses prophecy in 1 Corinthians⁷ as a valid part of Christian worship. In that letter, he condemns excessive tongue speaking but encourages intelligible prophecy. There is no biblical injunction preventing prophecy in contemporary worship, provided it is orderly, but we don't know very much about the form it took in the ancient church. Perhaps it was prayerful observations of everyday life, perhaps it was highly ecstatic and predictive in nature. Whatever it was, it can't be ignored.

Readers unaccustomed to reading accounts of UFO sightings, out-of-body experiences, parapsychological fiction, hauntings, or other tantalizing literature, will find the book difficult to read. The book claims that its prophecy catalog points accurately to America's future because of the similarity of the accounts from diverse observers, from which one must conclude that they all came from the same source (that is, God). But this similarity, if there at all, is difficult to recognize. Poor Los Angeles, for example, is destroyed by earthquakes, bombs from aircraft, tsunamis, missiles from submarines, and falling into the sea. But Los Angeles can only be destroyed once, which makes many of the prophecies mutually exclusive or, possibly, spread out over a long enough time span for the city to be destroyed and

⁵ Washington made his prayer in St. Paul's Chapel, which is on the original Ground Zero site.

⁶ Unlike deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning makes conclusions from observation. For example, the "big bang theory" of astronomers comes from inductive reasoning applied to observations in the universe.

⁷ 1 Cor. 12-14.

rebuilt multiple times. Perhaps if Snyder treated prophecies on particular cities or regions together, creating a cogent narrative for each, some of the confusion could have been avoided. In fact, the multitude of prophecies that predict completely different outcomes for a city or region argues against the notion that these contemporary prophecies have any value at all.

Perhaps one can come to Snyder's aid at this point. If these contemporary prophecies are metaphorical, than one might argue that the *object* of each prophecy is valid but the *means* is not. After all, the Bible uses metaphor, simile, and symbol frequently,⁸ so why would contemporary prophecy be any different? Then we might conclude, for example, that Los Angeles is doomed by many prophecies, but that the means of its destruction is as yet unspecified, each prophecy using images that are more suited to the nature and circumstances of the one having the vision or dream. But Snyder does not make this suggestion in his book.

Matthew 24

The biggest problem with Snyder's newest book is its heavy dependence on Matthew 24, which he uses as chapter headings and the complete basis for organizing his material:

- The "signs" of Matthew 24 were not to describe the manner of destruction that God may use either on the last day or as judgment against an individual country, but rather to encourage believers that they could trust God even in the event that the "signs" take place in their lifetimes.
- Paul assumed that the Matthew 24 signs had already taken place because he taught his followers that the Lord's return was imminent.⁹ The entire purpose of Matthew 24 and 25 (and many other passages in the New Testament witness¹⁰) are to warn believers to be constantly ready for the Parousia, which would come as a thief in the night.
- In no event can one interpret Matthew 24 as having anything to do with a judgment against a single nation. Matthew 24 is about the "end of the age,"¹¹ and when that day comes it will affect the entire world, if not the entire cosmos. It will not be localized to a single country.

We must acknowledge the growing interest in, and popularity of, charismatic experience over the last half century. Not only do we have the rise of charismatic institutional churches,¹² but quite a number of believers have settled into a house church format, two-thirds of which identify themselves as charismatic.¹³ House churches, one could argue, are far more likely to welcome charismatic prophecy than are institutional churches; perhaps the larger, institutional congregations intimidate prophetic Christians and tend to "quench the spirit." But the New Testament warns us that, concerning prophecy, we must always "test the spirits."¹⁴

⁸ Daniel, Ezekiel, and Revelation.

⁹ 1 Cor. 15:51-52, 2 Cor. 5:1-10.

¹⁰ James 5:3, Rev. 22:20, 1 Cor. 16:22, 2 Pet. 10-12.

¹¹ Matthew 24:3.

¹² Smith, Brittany, "More Than 1 in 4 Christians Are Pentecostal, Charismatic, *The Christian Post*, 21 Dec. 2011, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/more-than-1-in-4-christians-are-pentecostal-charismatic.html>.

¹³ Of those house churches in the House Church Directory that indicated whether they were charismatic or not, charismatic churches outnumbered non-charismatic churches 2:1.

¹⁴ ! John 4:1-6. 1 Thess. 5:20-22.

In the final chapters, where the author breaks away from Matthew 24, he provides testimonies of hope for a Great Awakening. He centers this on the underground churches, which can only be house churches.

Conclusions

Both books converge on a common theme: the urgent need for a national turning to God. Great Awakenings have happened in America before, and are a true component of its history. While early settlers were devout Christians, many rogues fled to the New World to escape prosecution, and it didn't take too many generations for apostasy to set in. In reaction to this, America experienced a series of "Great Awakenings":

- The First Great Awakening. 1720-1740.
- The Second Great Awakening. 1790-1810.
- The Third Great Awakening. 1850-1910.

To this list might be added the Billy Graham "crusades," Promise Keepers, and others, but the historical impact of each awakening was less than the one before. Perhaps we need more preachers like Charles Spurgeon, who convicted non-believers by the thousands who came to hear him out of curiosity. Or a George Whitefield who once preached to over 23,000 people at the same time on the Boston Common before the advent of electronic amplification.¹⁵

Both books make a substantial case for the decline of American culture, its embracing other gods, and its fleeing from biblical Christianity. Both Cahn and Snyder agree in their conclusions that a very powerful great awakening will be needed to get America out of its many problems and to put God back into his proper place in the hearts of its people. Hopefully, it is not too late to repent, repeal the more egregious legislated national sins, welcome God back into the center of American life, appease God's anger, and hope for a new era of God's blessings on America.

¹⁵ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-38/george-whitefield-did-you-know.html>.