

*Bible prophecy is an emotionally loaded subject. In it, a great supernatural Being claims to know EXACTLY what will happen to man in the next few years. Some marvel—most ridicule. Some believe—most criticize. Criticize? That's the "sport of scholars." In this article, we examine "modern theology's critical analysis" of Ezekiel, Daniel and Isaiah—and discover why the critics cannot ignore the prophets!*

# Here's Why the Critics Can't Ignore the Prophets

**W**hy is that man cannot dismiss the Bible with a wave of the hand as he might other writings of the ancient world? The Bible—more than all the other books put together—has drawn unparalleled attention from critics. Nothing in the history of literature can begin to compare with it. It has been examined, dissected, reviled, pulled apart, and even put back together again and defended.

For some reason, man could not simply say, "I don't believe it" and then carry on as always. There are many reasons why. But standing head and shoulders above all the rest is prophecy!

## Prophecy Troubles Critics

The human mind, even gifted with the greatest insight and sagacity, can go only so far in predicting future events. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the twelve minor prophets have all gone far beyond the tightly limited boundaries of mortal man. So the critics have a choice: Either they must admit that a power and intelligence greater than their own human mind had inspired those prophecies, or they must find some other way to explain them.

Guess which alternative the critics have chosen!

They have chosen to look for a human explanation. Their usual solution

is ridiculously simple—they "re-date" the prophecies! They shove the date of composition forward a few centuries—so that the prophecies appear to have been written after all of the prophesied events had already occurred!

It is significant that no critic has ever attempted to deny the divine origin of these prophecies while leaving them in their own time setting.

Actually, this effort of the critics unequivocally proves the phenomenal accuracy of the prophets. Why else would a materialistic "scholar" feel it necessary to fabricate a new day? If the prophecies were not accurate—if even only one were wrong—critics would love to expose this obvious incompetence and glaring error by retaining the true dates. But they can not do so. They full well realize that Bible prophecy—if they don't tamper with the dates—is unerringly, precisely accurate in even its most intricate details.

So the critics have only one choice—they must alter the date of the prophetic statement and turn it into contemporary history. [They have to or they are faced with the inevitable—a Being that is capable of making the foretold events come to pass as He pleases...]

But can we know the dates with any certainty?



We certainly can!

In this article, we will demonstrate the absolute prophetic authenticity of three of the most important prophets—Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah.

### Date of Ezekiel

Ezekiel is one of the easiest of the prophets to date. No one was any more thorough—he gives us no less than twelve specific dates in his book.

Ezekiel dates his prophecies from the year of “Jehoiachin’s captivity” by Nebuchadnezzar’s reign which occurred at the time of the spring equinox in 596 B.C. (II Chron. 36:10). Since all historians agree upon the dates of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, we can compose the following dates for the book of Ezekiel:

Chapter 1:1-2	5 <sup>th</sup> day of the 4 <sup>th</sup> month in the 5 <sup>th</sup> year (592 B.C.)
Chapter 8:1	5 <sup>th</sup> day of the 6 <sup>th</sup> month in the 6 <sup>th</sup> year (591 B.C.)
Chapter 20:1	10 <sup>th</sup> day of the 5 <sup>th</sup> month in the 7 <sup>th</sup> year (590 B.C.)
Chapter 24:1	10 <sup>th</sup> day of the 10 <sup>th</sup> month in the 9 <sup>th</sup> year (beginning of 587 B.C.)
Chapter 26:1	1 <sup>st</sup> day of a month in the 11 <sup>th</sup> year (586 B.C.)
Chapter 29:1	12 <sup>th</sup> day of the 10 <sup>th</sup> month in the 10 <sup>th</sup> year (end of 587 B.C.)
Chapter 30:20	7 <sup>th</sup> day of the 1 <sup>st</sup> month in the 11 <sup>th</sup> year (586 B.C.)
Chapter 32:1	1 <sup>st</sup> day of the 12 <sup>th</sup> month in the 12 <sup>th</sup> year (beginning of 584 B.C.)
Chapter 32:17	15 <sup>th</sup> day of the month in the 12 <sup>th</sup> year (584 B.C.)
Chapter 33:21	5 <sup>th</sup> day of the 10 <sup>th</sup> month in the 12 <sup>th</sup> year (end of 585 B.C.)
Chapter 40:1	10 <sup>th</sup> day of the beginning month of the civil year Tishri, the seventh month in the 25 <sup>th</sup> year (572 B.C.)

Now that’s evidence! Yet, some critics just toss aside such careful, meticulous dating!

### Where Critics Go Wrong

Why, then, do the same critics attempt to place the authorship of the book

of Ezekiel between 400 and 230 B.C.?

The answer is twofold. First, they must assume—without proof—that Ezekiel’s prophecies are not of divine origin. Then, proceeding from this assumption, they reasoned that Ezekiel had to have had certain historical information available before he could have written these remarkable “histories”. His in-depth script for the fall of Tyre, for example, was still being acted out in fantastic detail until about 320 B.C. Consequently, the critics reason, Ezekiel couldn’t have written it before that time!

undetected until the present day!

### A “Pseudo Ezekiel”?

Now let’s consider the problems that this imaginary, “pseudo-Ezekiel” would have had to face in getting his spurious book accepted as the work of an original Ezekiel and then have it accepted as Scripture.

During the time of the Babylonian captivity, there was a recognized religious authority among the Jews. Ezekiel refers to them as the “elders of Judah” (Ezek. 8:1).



But Ezekiel’s prophecies about Tyre’s destruction were indeed written in 596 B.C.—as is clearly proclaimed. How then could the critics explain its incredible accuracy for the next 250 years without acknowledging their Creator God in heaven?

(In reality, the prophecy concerning Tyre is still being fulfilled today—so using the critics’ own reasoning, we would have to conclude that the Book of Ezekiel has not been written yet!

Let’s put it bluntly: We are asked to believe that Ezekiel’s dates are an out-and-out fraud. Furthermore, we are asked to believe that this fraud in dating went

Later, when Cyrus decided to give permission for the Temple to be rebuilt, “Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites . . . to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5). The leaders of this expedition were Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

A little later, about 457 B.C., Ezra comes to Palestine. Ezra is called a “ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given” (Ezra 7:6). “Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach Israel statutes and judgments” (verse 10).

Notice that Ezra was not a lawgiver, but a scribe—a copier—of an already existing code of law.

Throughout Ezra and Nehemiah, it is quite obvious that there is a ruling body of Jews concerned with ecclesiastical affairs and that there is a “holy scripture” an authoritative body of religious writings (see Neh. 8:1).

There can be no question that the “law of Moses” was the Torah—the first five books of your Old Testament. Remember this was before 400 B.C.

Now back to the mischievous plot of “pseudo-Ezekiel.” He would have had the rather formidable task of palming off on a group of Jewish priests, Levites, and governors, a totally new book which none of them had ever heard before—and convince them that it was written during the Babylonian captivity. Quite an assignment!

The Jews have always been an intelligent, practical people with a great deal of common sense. Would they have accepted a book purporting to have foretold, in advance, the history of the last few years, yet which did not appear until after the event?

Would you have accepted such a book?

Suppose some individual would try to convince you that he has written a book listing in detail all the major events of 1990-1995 and that the book was published in 1960, but he gave you a copy of the book in the year 2000, would you immediately accept this would be prophet?

Wouldn't it seem a little bit contrived?

When one comprehends the exalted position of the Torah among Jews past and present, the obstacles that a “pseudo-Ezekiel” would face becomes insurmountable.

### Why was Ezekiel Accepted?

Why then were Ezra and the men of the Great Synagogue (the assemblage of priests and Levites constituting the religious authority) willing to accept the

real Ezekiel at all? The answer becomes obvious when we understand that the Canon of the Old Testament—that is, the books making up the Old Testament—was complete by the end of the 5th Century B.C. Ezra and the Jews with him in Babylon were aware of the prophetic work of Ezekiel when they returned.

Ezekiel had been part of the succession of prophets: He had held an office which was honored and respected. His prophecies had already begun to come to pass. And as they continued to be fulfilled before the Jews' very eyes—while the book was their very possession. Nobody could question the

is the fact that NO MAN could have made the prophecies that Ezekiel made. This, however, is not evidence for a later date, rather, it is PROOF OF A DIVINE ORIGIN!

### Date of Daniel

Daniel was a contemporary of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar about 604 B.C. and continued to live and write for more than the next 70 years.

Certain critics, however, date Daniel between 165 and 175 B.C.! That shouldn't come as a great surprise. But, just for curiosity, let's examine whatever reasons they have fabricated. Again, topping the



authenticity of the book.

Interestingly enough, even the critics have not been willing to call Ezekiel an out-and-out fraud. Their reason is obvious: Frauds have ulterior motives. And any ulterior motive would have been transparent throughout. But no such motive can be found in Ezekiel. And no fraud writes like Ezekiel writes.

Ezekiel rings true. Literature with such a powerful moral force simply does not arise from a hypocritical mind.

Finally, since both Jewish tradition and the Jewish historian Josephus state that the Old Testament was completed about the end of the 5th Century B.C., there can be no question of a later date for Ezekiel.

Absolutely, the only claim that can be advanced to question Ezekiel's own date

list, is the assumption that the Book of Daniel is of purely human origin.

The fundamental axiom of criticism is the dictum that a prophet always spoke out of a definite historical situation to the present needs of the people among whom he lived and that a definite HISTORICAL situation shall be pointed out for each prophecy (George L. Robinson, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

Consider what this means. It is a “fundamental axiom” that every prophet always spoke to and about the present needs of the people among whom he lived. In other words, Daniel is not seen by the critics as a prophet contemporary with Nebuchadnezzar, but rather as a “pious fraud” writing about 175 B.C. This “pseudo-Daniel,” it is reasoned, was

directing his “prophecies” to the current needs of the people in the second century B.C., since some of his “prophecies” cover that period.

### Daniel Is Challenged

When one understands that what was going on about 175 B.C. the critics' motives become embarrassingly obvious.

This was the time of the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. The book of Daniel covers historical details of the breakup of Alexander the Great's empire into four divisions and the subsequent war between the king of the south, climaxing in Antiochus Epiphanes' invasion of Jerusalem. Daniel's spectacu-

When he asked for further understanding, he was told: “Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the *time of the end*” (Daniel 12:9).

2. Daniel's words were *not* directed to the people of his own time nor even primarily to those in the second century B.C., but to those living at the *time of the end*.

Of course, some will argue that this was an attempt to make the people of his time believe that the end was near. Fair enough, but why then did they accept the book into the Canon when the end didn't

Daniel—decided to attempt to foist off a series of spurious prophecies on his gullible contemporaries (perhaps motivated by a dare from his friends). He then proceeded to embellish his phony predictions with a detailed description of life in Nebuchadnezzar's court, including punishment given for certain crimes, details of the religious leaders, customs of the time, etc.

The critics have generally felt that many of these details were fanciful tales, since a Jew living so much later [some 400 years difference] would have had no direct knowledge of these ancient times. He would have had to have been something of a novelist.

The third chapter of Daniel is thought by critics to bear this out.

The “story” of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego has been labeled “preposterous.” The very idea of throwing men into a furnace seems absurd. It simply doesn't fit the normal pattern of executions.

A letter (dated even before the time of Nebuchadnezzar), however, has been found (and is in the Nies Babylonian collection at the Yale University) which contains a royal decree ordering the death of a slave by burning in a furnace! (John B. Alexander, “New Light on the Fiery Furnace,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 69, 1950, pp. 375-6.)

Daniel's details of Nebuchadnezzar's court have been proven to be remarkably accurate. Sir Henry Rawlinson found that the magicians in Babylon at that time correspond exactly to the three classes of Chaldean doctors which Daniel enumerates.

Fairy tales don't come true.

### Daniel's Prophecies for Today!

Daniel's prophecies didn't finish in 175 B.C.! And that's crucial—for this article, and for your life.

Having had Daniel's prophecies in hand since the sixth century B.C., it must have been quite an experience for the Jews of the time to see these things being

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lar in-advance description of the minute details of all of this (in Daniel 11 the longest “detailed” prophecy in the Bible) are too absolutely accurate to have been written hundreds of years before they took place, say the critics.

Too accurate to have been conceived by man, that is, [who have lived 400+ years before the event actually occurred!]

Therefore, the “fundamental axiom of criticism” is applied—and Daniel is quickly put into a “time machine” and “re-materialized” some four hundred years later—as an attempt is made to set his prophecies into the “proper” historical situation of the Maccabean revolt.

There are two things wrong with this hypothesis:

1. Daniel himself did not understand all that he wrote.

come? [Besides, as pointed out earlier, the Old Testament Canon had already been compiled and completed several hundred years earlier.]

### A Critical “Fairy Tale”

Once upon a time (about 175 B.C.) a pious man (really a religious nut or a clever fraud) resolved to avail himself of the traditions surrounding the name of Daniel. He then set about to write the circumstances of his own time. And so, in the name of “Daniel the prophet,” this fast-talking “pseudo-Daniel” proclaimed words of admonition and prophecy to the “faithful” (deceived idiots) around him in the second century B.C.

Now ponder what this imaginary situation would have to have been. This wily fellow—living long after the time of

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fulfilled before their eyes. The prophecies of chapters 2, 7 and 8 were proving to be absolutely accurate. The Babylonian Empire was succeeded by the Medo-Persian Empire, which was in turn conquered by Alexander.

When Alexander came to Jerusalem, we are told:

He went up to the temple, where He sacrificed to God under the direction of the high priest, and showed due honor to the priests and to the high priest himself. And, when the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which he had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XI, viii, 5).

With Alexander's rise to power at such a young age and his unbelievable march across the civilized world, it must have seemed impossible to those who were holding the book of Daniel that his kingdom could be broken at its peak of strength as Daniel had prophesied (chapter 8:8). Yet it happened! Not only was his empire broken, but it was later—as Daniel had said—divided into four primary divisions.

### Daniel's Prophecy for Rome

A person living at the time of the degeneration of these four kingdoms and the rise of Rome in the west could—if we allow our imaginations to be stretched—have forecasted what was about to take place. This, of course, is what the critics believe a pseudo-Daniel did about 175 B.C. A man could—at that point in time—have possibly predicted that Rome would become the fourth great world empire. What a man could not have predicted at that time, was that Rome would be the last!

But Daniel did.

And he did not stop there. He went on to describe the nature of the Roman Empire: what it would be like, how it would develop, predicting that the Roman Empire would endure incredibly—being “resurrected” many times rather than being replaced, as the pattern of world history up to that point had been!

And finally, as incredible as it may sound, what it would do before the returning, conquering Creator God would destroy it!

The story is worth reading.

It would have been logical in 175 B.C. to look at the lesson of history and thereby assume that Rome was going to be just like all the rest—another fighting, conquering, pillaging, destroying world empire. Daniel, however, emphasizes that this fourth kingdom would be different from all the kingdoms before it (Dan. 7:7, 19, 23).

The unique strength of Rome, its terrifying nature, its twofold division, and its later history are all foretold by Daniel with stunning accuracy. So are the successive revivals—and a final union of ten European kings prophesied to destroy the English-speaking peoples in this generation.

How could a “pious fraud” have foretold the future beyond the latest dates given by the critics?

Or beyond today's date? Daniel's prophecy is alive in today's headlines—and tomorrow's! Using the critics historical approach to Daniel for a moment, we would have to again humorously conclude that his book is not yet written!

### One Isaiah, Two Isaiah, Three Isaiah, Four ...

Isaiah is dated by Isaiah himself between 760 and 695 B.C. Notwithstanding, and as we might expect, critics have attempted to alter these dates by as much as 300 years. One even went so far as to place Isaiah in the first century B.C.—but was rather embarrassed when archaeologists discovered a complete scroll of Isaiah, copied and preserved, dated in the second century 125 B.C.

When we examine the reasons for the difficulties that critics have with Isaiah, we find the same answer that we found for Ezekiel and Daniel—Isaiah is just a little too accurate for their materialistic tastes.

But with Isaiah, the problem could not be solved by merely pushing the date forward. The critics had to dissect the book—and have it attributed to the fraudulent writings of between two and five authors!

Jewish tradition informs us that King Manasseh of Judah had Isaiah sawn in two—the New Testament book of Hebrews alludes to this (Hebrews 11:37). But today's “higher critics” have butchered him into five pieces!

Why were two to five fictitious authors needed by the critics? To understand, we must return to the

“fundamental axiom of criticism.”

Having decided that a prophet cannot foretell the future, it is essential for the critics that the “pseudo-author” be writing for his own generation. When we have begun with this assumption, it is only natural to look to history for a historical context into which each prophet can be fit. What is strange about Isaiah, however, is that *there is no historical situation into which Isaiah AS A WHOLE can be squeezed!*

So there's only one “solution.” Isaiah must be “*sawn asunder [a second time...]*”

### Critics With Saw in Hand ...

According to some, “the conversion of the heathen” lay quite beyond the horizon of any eighth century prophet; consequently, Isaiah 2:2-4 and all similar passages which foretell the conversion of those outside the chosen people are to be relegated to an age subsequent to Isaiah (George L. Robinson, “Isaiah,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, p. 1505).

Other ideas which are supposed to be “beyond the horizon” of Isaiah are those of “universal peace,” “universal judgment,” “the Apocalyptic character of chapters 24-27,” “the return from captivity,” and even the poetic character of some passages. All this, according to critics, means that Isaiah couldn't have written the entire book.

The question we have faced in Ezekiel, Daniel and now in Isaiah is whether their prophecies were dreamed up by “religious geniuses,” or whether they were inspired by God. The only evidence advanced by the critics to prove a later date for these prophets is the prejudicial “evidence” actually circular reasoning—that no man could have written the prophecies when these men said they did.

That isn't proof!

That's begging the question! We all agree that that concept of the “conversion of the heathen” might have lain completely “beyond the horizons of any eighth-century prophet.” But it doesn't lie beyond the horizons of God, nor does it lie beyond the ability of God to convey His concept to a prophet who otherwise could never have understood it! (See II Peter 1:21 and I Cor. 2:9-10.)

Now, what shred of evidence have the critics mustered up to indicate that Isaiah may have been written by more than one prophet?

All their hopes are placed in the one basket of literary criticism. A “first Isaiah” is supposedly distinguished from a “second Isaiah” (and a “second” from a “third”) solely on the basis of change in writing style.

But the real crux of the matter is not writing style. Nothing definite can be determined by counting particles, articles, conjunctions, or any other “characteristic traits” of a man’s writing. The fact of the matter is that an accomplished author’s writing style should and will change through the years—so any evidence based upon writing style is tenuous at best. (Modern computer-based literary analysis has claimed that Paul wrote [only] five of his 14 epistles, that Ian Fleming didn’t write James Bond, and that the works of Graham Greene and G. K. Chesterton had “more than one author.”)

Obviously, literary analysis of writing style completely fails to take into account the possibility of a purposeful change in form of the literature in question—i.e., a switch from a prose to poetry, or a switch from one form of poetry to another (in which the writer uses or omits words for the sake of euphony, rhythm, etc.).

The critics must face their own motivations.

The real criteria for breaking Isaiah down into sections are the prophecies themselves. No man could have written them as “prophecies.” And any man who wrote them as “histories” would have had to be present in several eras of Israel’s history.

Which might be possible for a tree—but not for a man.

### Ageless Test of Prophecy

Another reason for the critics’ confusion in the prophetic books of the Bible is their failure to understand the simple principle of duality in prophecy.

In the 40th and 41st chapters of Isaiah, God is challenging Israel to prove their idols and false gods. The test He proposes is one of prophecy—foretelling the future. In the process of challenging the idols to prove that they are indeed real gods, an important principle of prophecy is expressed:

Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth, and shew us what shall *happen* [in the future]: let them shew the *former* things [fulfilled

prophecy], what they be, that we may consider them, and know the *latter end* of them; or declare us things for to come (Isaiah 41:21, 22).

This is something which God does repeatedly in prophecy. In preparing to give us the understanding of the latter end of a thing, He gives us a prophecy which will have *two* fulfillments. The former is *not* the *primary purpose* of the prophecy, but is merely a “type” a model which we can examine to understand the latter fulfillment. It is this latter fulfillment the “antitype” which, being far more comprehensive in its scope, is the main goal of the original prophecy.

Isaiah’s prophecies are this way and Isaiah himself knew it. He not only understood that prophecy was dual, but he understood *why* it was dual. It was not merely to help us understand the latter end of these prophecies it was also to *confound and confuse the skeptics*. [In so doing, God is able to prove that He is indeed God by making come to pass what He declared not only once, but TWICE to send a message that HE is doing it and not just mere “coincidence...” Some prophecies are corrective in nature, meaning God is punishing the nation or an individual for disobedience. A prior fulfillment serves as a warning that a second one is forthcoming, greater and more severe, if the nation or individual continues to disobey God!]

In Isaiah 28:9, Isaiah asks: “Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.” The spiritually immature will not understand. Isaiah goes on to say:

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little... that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken (Isaiah 28:9-13).

God did not intend for scornful men to fully comprehend His Truth. Therefore, the prophecies of God are *purposely NOT* laid out in a simple, straightforward manner but are found “here a little and there a little.” And they are *dual* and it takes a *mind imbued with spiritual discernment to understand* (I Cor. 2:12-14). (Christ used the same technique when teaching in parables; parables were designed to *hide* the meaning; see Matthew 13:10-17.)

The critics only confound themselves, because it is utterly

impossible to confine Isaiah’s prophecy to any one historical context. The prophecies are deliberately *dual* and are obviously intended for people of *other* ages.

When the facts are considered, the criticism leveled at *all* the prophets becomes *transparent*. The critics have neither correctly evaluated the evidence nor logically combined it. They have started with an assumption that the authors of the prophets were completely of no divine inspiration. From this point on, all criticism degenerates into a simple effort to explain away the fact that God’s prophets foretell the future with stunning accuracy.

But why should anyone want to be rid of the prophet?

Paul characterized a group of men who seemed to want to get rid of God. Perhaps there’s a comparison [or similarity]:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress {marginal reading} the truth in unrighteousness ... because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools... and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind... (Romans 1:18-28).

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