

United Church of God, *an International Association*



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Response to “A New Look at Prophecy”

Prophecy Study Paper

Prepared by the Prophecy Advisory Committee
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All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

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When it comes to prophecy, there are many ideas and views being published today. There are many sites on the Internet devoted to the subject of prophecy. Among the Churches of God there are divergent views regarding prophecy. In the United Church of God, *an International Association*, the accepted view of prophecy is that which was consistently taught by Herbert W. Armstrong. In order to arrive at another view one must first show where the error was in his teaching. With that in mind, a process has been developed and approved by the Council of Elders for those who wish to submit papers on prophecy for consideration (a copy of this process is available upon request from the home office).

With regard to biblical prophecies of Israel in the end times, the Church of God has long believed and taught the following.

- The name “Israel” (Jacob) is associated primarily with the modern nations of Britain and the United States. These two nations are the modern descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of the patriarch Joseph, on whom the name of “Israel” was placed (Genesis 48:16). The early colonial populations of these nations were predominantly descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh.
- The birthright promises from God of national greatness, strength and bountiful material blessings that were passed from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob to Joseph have been given to Britain and the United States in great measure in the last 200 years.
- Because of departing from God and giving in to widespread sin, these modern descendants of Joseph will lose their unique blessings from God and will be reduced ultimately to defeat, considerable scattering and servitude before the return of Jesus Christ.
- The Beast, a modern revival of the Roman Empire, also called “the king of the North,” will be instrumental in the final downfall of modern Israel (Britain and the United States), though other factors will contribute to its collapse.
- A remnant of these nations will ultimately be rescued from this time of great chastisement (the “time of Jacob’s trouble”) by Jesus Christ, at His return, and this repentant remnant will be restored to peace in their ancient ancestral home, reconciled to God and allowed to enter into the New Covenant with God.
- Following the return of Jesus Christ, and the gathering from their scattered and captive state, the people of Israel will be protected by Christ from further warfare, including protection from a millennial attack by Gog and Magog on their “unwalled villages” (Ezekiel 38).

Recently a paper has been distributed under the title “A New Look at Prophecy” (NLP) that contains many conclusions quite at variance to the prophetic understanding summarized above. This paper was distributed by individuals and not by the United Church of God. While it does correctly identify the modern descendants of Joseph as Britain and the United States, it contains many small misinterpretations of prophecy as well as major significant conclusions that are inconsistent with the understanding of biblical prophecy espoused by the United Church of God. Among those misinterpretations and variant conclusions are the following:

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- Modern Israel (Britain and the United States) will be a part of the “king of the North” via their membership in NATO.
- New York City is the biblical “Babylon the Great.”
- Russia and China (Gog and Magog) will attack Israel and its NATO (“king of the North”) partners prior to the return of Jesus Christ. This attack constitutes “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” It is the attack from the north described in Ezekiel 38.
- God will protect Israel from the devastation intended by this attack and will give Israel a great victory over Gog and Magog.
- Therefore, there will be no scattering or captivity of Britain and the United States prior to the return of Jesus Christ.
- The blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 have no application to modern Britain and the United States, because they were a part of, and limited to, ancient Israel and the Sinaitic covenant. That covenant is abolished, and so is any consideration of an end-time realization of these curses.

The United Church of God (UCG) does not accept these prophetic conclusions of NLP and considers them the product of a misunderstanding of Bible prophecy. Without addressing many of the minor misinterpretations in the 22,000-word NLP paper, following is a summary of the fundamental prophetic misunderstandings that lead us to reject this paper’s conclusions.

1. Misunderstanding and misapplication of the terms “latter days” and “last days.”

NLP adopts too narrow a view of the biblical expressions “latter days” and “last days.” Two of the key scriptural references that under gird the structure of NLP are Numbers 24:14 and Genesis 49:1, 22-24. In these two passages, descendants of Israel in the “latter days” or “last days” are described as being protected and strengthened by God. NLP concludes therefore, in the light of these scriptures, that there is no possibility for an end-time defeat and subjugation of the descendants of Israel. The reasoning is, if Israel is blessed and protected and strengthened by God in the “last” (or “latter”) days, it could not also be chastened, defeated and scattered in the “last” (or “latter”) days.

This view fails to take into account the biblical evidence that the “latter days” or “last days” cover an extended period of time, including all three of the following conditions: a period of national greatness and blessings from God, a period of severe national chastisement and tribulation, and a period of gathering of a remnant and restoration to favor with God.

The biblical terms “latter day,” “last days” and “last hour” can refer to an extensive period of time. As early as the days of the apostles, the term was used to describe their era.

“Little children, it is **the last hour**; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18, emphasis added throughout).

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“God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has **in these last days** spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh . . .’ ” (Acts 2:16-17).

The “end time” (“latter days”) is a broad enough term to encompass both a period when modern Joseph is a great and dominant power enjoying the birthright blessings and protection from God (Genesis 49:22-26; Numbers 24:14) and also a subsequent period when these blessings and protection are withdrawn from Israel because of sin.

Micah 5:7-15 is a prophecy encompassing both of these “end time” periods and conditions.

Verses 7-9 describe an extensive “end-time” period when the remnant of Jacob is great, powerful, protected and blessed by God. This has been the situation for more than 200 years, up to the present. “Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, that tarry for no man nor wait for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, who, if he passes through, both treads down and tears in pieces, and none can deliver. Your hands shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off.” This description of the end-time “remnant” of Jacob is certainly consistent with the descriptions of people helped, protected and blessed by God found in Genesis 49 and Numbers 24.

But the prophecy continues (verses 10-15): “‘And it shall be in that day,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will cut off your horses from your midst and destroy your chariots. I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst; you shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst; thus I will destroy your cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard.’”

This prophecy, also directed to the end-time “remnant” of Israel, depicts a much different situation. Here, the blessings and protections of God are not present. Instead, God is chastening Israel—it’s a time of great trouble for end-time Jacob.

2. The “time of Jacob’s trouble” not understood.

There are three descriptions in Bible prophecy of a uniquely horrible time—the worst time ever in world history. There cannot be three times, each of which is the worst in all history. All three descriptions must be of the same time. It is a time of great trouble, chastening, scattering and even captivity of Israel, and it is in the “latter days” shortly before the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of David.

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Jeremiah 30:7-11: “Alas! For **that day is great, so that none is like it**; and it is **the time of Jacob’s trouble**, but he shall be saved out of it. ‘For it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But **they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up** for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says the LORD, ‘nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, **I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity**. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid. For I am with you,’ says the LORD, ‘to save you; though I make a full end of all **nations where I have scattered you**, yet I will not make a complete end of you. But **I will correct you in justice, and will not let you go altogether unpunished.**”

Notice how Jacob’s condition is described in the above passage. Three times it refers to Jacob being “saved” out of the conditions that engulf them at this time, with the clear implication that their condition is so grave as to be a matter of survival. It also describes them as having a “yoke” on their neck, in “bonds,” being “enslave[d],” being in “captivity” and “scattered.” This hardly describes the end-time condition of Jacob portrayed in NLP, where Jacob is presumed to be a powerful and victorious partner in a NATO “king of the North.”

Daniel 12:1: “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and **there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time.**”

Matthew 24:21-22: “For then **there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be**. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved.”

The prophetic books of the Bible contain many references to God’s end-time chastisement of Israel (done in love and with the long-term goal of restoration, following repentance). These depictions of this end-time period of “Jacob’s trouble” cannot be squared with the conclusion that there is no such period of intense correction, subjugation and scattering of Israel (Britain and the United States) in the time just prior to the return of Jesus Christ.

God inspired the Bible to be written in such a way that it is often not possible to come to full understanding (either of doctrine or prophecy) without very careful attention to context, comparison with similar passages in other books of the Bible and understanding of the principle of duality. There is also the reality that some aspects of scriptural (prophetic) understanding are achieved only with the help of God’s Spirit and only at a time of God’s choosing.

As an example of this, Daniel was inspired to write down words of prophecy, the understanding of which he was not permitted to have—understanding that would only be given to those who read Daniel’s words much later, at the time of God’s choosing. This was also true of the other prophets. They were used to write down and preserve the words of God, but it was not always clear precisely what the words meant. Many prophetic passages were inspired to be

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written in such a way that understanding of them is only possible with the help of God, through His Spirit, and only at a time when God decides to make understanding available.

Daniel 12: 4, 9: “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase’ . . . And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.’”

1 Peter 1:10-12: “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.”

In this regard, we should consider the fact that a number of the prophets God sent to ancient Israel spoke and wrote revelatory messages from God to the houses of Israel, some of which applied directly to the people who lived then, but some of which had a future fulfillment. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others wrote before and during the fall of ancient Samaria (Israel) and Judah. Some of what they wrote clearly had a contemporary relevance and fulfillment. But, in these writings, there are occasional time markers that indicate an end-time fulfillment. These markers include references to a New Covenant, a dramatic change of heart of the survivors of a period of chastening, a time of resurrection and a final restoration of the remnant of Israel from a condition of subjugation, scattering and national calamity. Careful attention to these indicators of a future (end-time) fulfillment is required in order to come to understanding of Israel’s future.

3. Many prophecies foretell what is clearly a return from an *end-time* captivity.

The following are some of the prophecies that lead the UCG to conclude that there will indeed be a final restoration of Britain and the United States by Christ, but only after a time of, and from a condition of, terrible calamity on these people, i.e., God’s punishment for their sins. The combined and cumulative effect of the message of these passages (i.e., no one verse taken in isolation) is that modern Israel will go through a frightening time of national chastening just prior to Christ’s return, but that its surviving remnant will be restored to a wonderful time of peace, safety and a New Covenant with God.

Jeremiah 30:7-9: already quoted above.

Isaiah 27:12-13: “And it shall come to pass in that day that the LORD will thresh, from the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day: the great trumpet will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.”

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Comment: Note the time markers of “the great trumpet will be blown” and the outcasts will return from Egypt and Assyria and worship God in Jerusalem. After their eighth-century B.C. exile to Assyria, there is no record of Israelites returning to worship in Jerusalem (though a limited number of refugees who escaped captivity by fleeing to Judah would have). These markers show this to be an end-time prophecy.

Jeremiah 16:11-18: “. . . they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me. **Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know**, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favor. ‘Therefore behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that it shall no more be said, “The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,” but, “The LORD lives **who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.**” For **I will bring them back into their land** which I gave to their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishermen,’ says the LORD, ‘and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes. And first I will repay double for their iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols.’”

Comment: Note that here the return is described as being greater than the Exodus of several million people from Egypt in the 15th century B.C. This certainly would not describe the return of some 50,000 Jewish refugees from captivity in Babylon, so it must be describing an end-time return from captivity.

Jeremiah 23:2-8: “Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: ‘You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,’ says the LORD. ‘**But I will gather the remnant of My flock** out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,’ says the LORD. ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Therefore, behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that they shall no longer say, “As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,” but, “As the LORD lives **who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.**” And they shall dwell in their own land.’”

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Comment: Note that here again the return is described as being greater than the Exodus of several million people from Egypt in the 15th century B.C. Other distinct time markers place this prophecy in a millennial setting—Israel dwelling safely and being guided by God’s shepherds under the reign of the Messiah.

Isaiah 11:9-16: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious. It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time **to recover the remnant of His people who are left**, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will **assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah** from the four corners of the earth. Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; together they shall plunder the people of the east; they shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab; and the people of Ammon shall obey them. The LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; with His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River, and strike it in the seven streams, and make men cross over dry-shod. There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.”

Comment: Note the clear time marker that this return takes place under the millennial rule of the Messiah.

Jeremiah 31:10-13: “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’ For **the LORD has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him** from the hand of one stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, streaming to the goodness of the LORD . . . for I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow.”

Jeremiah 32:37-41: “Behold, **I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them** in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; **I will bring them back to this place**, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.”

Comment: Note the time marker of God making an “everlasting covenant” with them, i.e. the New Covenant.

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Ezekiel 34:12-16: “As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will **I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land;** I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ‘I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.’”

Comment: This cannot describe Israel’s past return from captivity, as they never returned after their exile in Assyria. It’s also hard to imagine that this is a description of the Jewish return from Babylon. The only reasonable application of this prophecy is that it is a description of a return in a millennial setting after Christ’s return.

Ezekiel 28:24-26: “‘And there shall no longer be a pricking brier or a painful thorn for the house of Israel from among all who are around them, who despise them. Then they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.’ Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘**When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered,** and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God.’”

Comment: This is obviously a description of a millennial setting.

Ezekiel 36:24-27: “For **I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.** Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

Comment: In this passage we see an obvious time marker of the application of the New Covenant, of Israel receiving God’s Spirit and at last being obedient to God.

Ezekiel 39:21-29: “‘I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward. **The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity;** because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.’”

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Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD: ‘**Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name—after they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness** in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid. **When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands,** and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; **for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says the Lord God.**”

Comment: Here is a time of captivity, then deliverance, then the pouring out of God’s Spirit on the house of Israel. The house of Israel was not brought back from its ancient captivity to Assyria and given God’s Spirit at that time. This is an end-time captivity and subsequent delivery of the (modern-day) house of Israel.

Hosea 5:5-7: “The pride of Israel testifies to his face; therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity; Judah also stumbles with them. With their flocks and herds they shall go to seek the LORD, but they will not find Him; He has withdrawn Himself from them. They have dealt treacherously with the LORD, for they have begotten pagan children. Now a New Moon shall devour them and their heritage.”

Comment: This prophecy was never fulfilled in ancient times. Israel and Judah never were brought down simultaneously, as this prophecy states. Never did they fall together, within the space of one month (a “New Moon”). The northern house of Israel’s fall to the Assyrians and the southern house of Judah’s fall to the Babylonians were separated by more than 125 years. This prophecy in Hosea of Israel and Judah being “devoured” is yet to be fulfilled.

Revelation 13:7: “And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.”

Comment: This prophecy indicates the scope of influence of the end-time Beast power. While this passage does not explicitly state that the Beast will be the agent of modern Israel’s destruction, it does clearly indicate that the Beast has the power and authority, given to him by Satan, to subdue any other existing power on earth.

4. Improperly limiting application of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

The assertion in NLP that the curses upon a disobedient Israel discussed in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 could have no end-time fulfillment because the covenant that contained those pronouncements is abolished is an erroneous conclusion. It fails to take into account the unchanging nature of God’s character. He changes not (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). When dealing with a people, God has expectations of them. He blesses for obedience; He chastens the disobedient.

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Fairness and consistency would seem to call for God’s chastening of what is left of modern Joseph and the removal of the blessings as this has already been taking place among the people of Ephraim. Since 1945 one after another of Ephraim’s multitude of nations has changed hands, fulfilling the prophecy of Deuteronomy 28:43-44: “The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower . . . he shall be the head and you shall be the tail.”

As each nation was taken over, a scattering of the physical descendants of Joseph took place that included significant loss of property, personal possessions and of life itself. Included in these nations were Rhodesia and South Africa, two nations ruled by Joseph’s descendants, that had significant numbers of Joseph’s descendants ruling over them and were taken over fairly recently.

If the fall of these various nations is not to be followed by the falls of Britain and the United States themselves, then God would not be consistent or fair. Additionally, we would have to consider the possibility that these nations sinned more than Americans, which is not the case.

God’s overall purpose in using this approach is to bring people to understand His sovereignty, righteousness and the goodness of Him and His ways. These are unchanging, eternal and spiritual realities. Over and over again, irrespective of any covenant, God makes it clear that obedience to His laws will result in blessings and disobedience will bring curses (see, for example, Exodus 15:25-26; Leviticus 25:18; Deuteronomy 4:40; 5:32-33; 6:1-3, 24; 10:12-13; 11:13-15, 18-21; 12:28; 26:16-19; 32:45-47). God wanted Israel to be a model nation to show other nations the blessings that would automatically flow from obedience to His laws (Deuteronomy 4:5-8).

The blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are no more obsolete or irrelevant in modern times than the inherent blessings and curses in the Second and Fifth Commandments. Both the blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 and the Ten Commandments were included in the terms of the Sinaitic Covenant. But neither the approach of God toward a group of people He is directly working with nor His spiritual law originated at Sinai or terminated in applicability since that covenant ended. Both are unchanging aspects of an unchanging God’s approach towards and expectation of men. The introductory passages in both Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 focus Israel’s attention on keeping God’s commandments, which existed prior to the ratification of the Old (Sinaitic) Covenant. Therefore, since the blessings and curses come about because of either obedience or disobedience to God’s laws which were instituted prior to Sinai, these blessings and curses still apply in modern times, to the descendants of Israel.

5. Incorrectly interpreting Ezekiel 38-39 as a premillennial prophecy.

Another erroneous assertion of NLP is that the Ezekiel 38 attack on Israel by Gog and Magog is before the return of Christ. NLP concludes that this attack is not successful, because God protects Israel from being devastated by it.

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It is not hard to show that placing this event before the Millennium is logically and factually unsupportable. The primary time marker of Ezekiel 38 is verse 11 which depicts Israel at peace, dwelling securely, with no provision for its own security. This certainly does not describe conditions in the world today or in the foreseeable future. The United States, of all peoples on earth, has made many provisions for its security and defense. Its military budget alone—\$325 billion for 2002—is larger than the GDP of most nations on the earth, and far higher than any other country’s military spending. The United States is not represented by a people “dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates.”

This must surely be a time, following the return of Jesus Christ, when the humbled, chastened, obedient remnant of end-time Israel has been gathered from its scattered state and is living under the protection of God.

The *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* concludes regarding this passage: “The combination of temporal notices that point to the messianic period as well as the general context of this passage clearly establish that the time of this invasion is the end times, after the people of Israel have been restored to the Promised Land and are living securely under Messiah’s protection.”

Conclusion

These five major misunderstandings underlie the argument and conclusions presented in NLP. Since all five misinterpretations can be rather easily demonstrated as inconsistent or incompatible with a number of scriptures, as demonstrated above, we cannot accept the conclusions of this paper as being scripturally sound. In addition, many minor points that lead to the conclusions presented in NLP, such as New York City being “Babylon the Great” and the 1991 Gulf War being the fulfillment of Daniel 11:40-44, while not addressed in this response, are similarly inconsistent with the Scriptures.

Scripture twice reminds us that “in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 11:14; 24:6). The Prophecy Advisory Committee urges that such prophetic speculations based on one person’s opinions not be broadly distributed, as this paper was, without the kind of proper and knowledgeable review and discussion for which the United Church of God has appropriate processes. Otherwise such approaches often lead only to confusion and division among the Body of Christ. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33).