

BIBLE PROPHECY IS IMPORTANT!

The dictionary says the meaning of prophecy is the foretelling or prediction of what is to come. People are thinking about prophecy. One man made the comment, "I am interested in the future because that is where I am going to spend the rest of my life." Polls have informed us that 41% of Americans (not a Christian poll) believe the end times have arrived. More than three quarter of evangelicals (77%) and more than half of the Protestants (54%) agree that we are living in the end times as described in the Bible. Another poll says that many Americans link the possibility of a U.S. Military strike against Syria as linked with the end times. Threat of air strikes against Syria have one in three Americans believing that this is part of the Bible plan of the end times. One in four believe the U.S. Military strike in Syria could lead to Armageddon. A secular poll states that one in five people believe that the world will end in their lifetime. We are even being entertained by Post-Apocalyptic scenarios in the movie industry.

One of the benefits of studying Bible prophecy is that it sheds light on and understanding to the Word of God. Prophecy is a mighty key to understanding the Bible. It puts the pieces together. Some believe that to get our minds on tomorrow is not relevant for today; it can become a distraction from the present. If that is the case, there is a lot of distraction in the Bible! Prophecy is dominant in the Bible; 25 of the books of the Bible are prophetic. In the 260 chapters in the New Testament, there are 300 references to the coming of Christ. That makes 1 out of 30 verses in the New Testament speak of the coming of Christ. Of the 27 books of the New Testament, 23 refer to the coming of Christ. Of the four that do not mention it, three are one-chapter books. Jesus Himself referred to His own coming 21 times. For every time the first coming of Christ is mentioned in the Bible, His second coming is mentioned 8 times. We are exhorted over 50 times to be ready for the coming of Christ. We are to live looking for the return of Christ. The law of proportion in the Bible has to do with the frequency something is mentioned as to its importance. That being the case, prophecy is very important.

Three chapters into the Bible we find prophecy. Genesis 3:15 speaks of the coming and purpose of Christ. Genesis 49 speaks of the future of Israel. Think of it- the Bible begins with these words, "In the beginning..." (Genesis 1:1a). God has given the world a beginning and there is going to be an ending. God created the heavens and the earth and He said in II Peter 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." I and II Thessalonians and the book of Revelation are dedicated to the subject of Christ's second coming. We can

understand the Bible better if we understand God's overall plan for the future. There is a special blessing promised to those who study prophecy and pay attention to what it says. This is what Revelation 1:3 promises: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." This promise is a present tense promise. It is granted to those who continue to read it.

I. Prophecy exalts Christ

Revelation 19:10 says, "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The book of the Revelation is all about Christ. There are 30 names and titles for Jesus Christ in the book of the Revelation, such as the Prince of the Kings of the Earth; King of Kings and Lord of Lords; The Alpha and Omega; The First and the Last. Bible prophecy has its beginning in Jesus. Gen. 3:15 says, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it (Jesus) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel."

There are approximately 109 Bible prophecies that were fulfilled in the first coming of Christ on the earth. There were 33 prophecies fulfilled in the final twenty-four hours in the life of Jesus Christ. This is amazing! Christ not only fulfilled prophecy, but He foretold prophecy. Two days before He died, He stands on the Mount of Olives and says, "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:27). In Matthew 25: 31-34 Christ promises to return with His holy angels and judge the nations of the earth. Listen to this significant proclamation by Jesus in John 13:19: "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." Again in John 14:29 Christ said, "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." Bible prophecy exalts Christ and protects us from deception as Jesus warned when His disciples asked Him in Matthew 24:3, "...tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Our Lord did not deflect; He went right to the heart of the issue and said in Matthew 24:4, "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you." So Christ gives us prophecy to clarify and identify Him as "...the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (I Timothy 6:15b).

II. Prophecy motivates us to Christlikeness

Prophecy motivates us to service and godly living. Prophecy is given to change our lives. We are not promised "pie in the sky" without personal application. God did not give us the prophetic Scriptures to simply satisfy our curiosity, but to

teach us how to live. The eternal perspective is given as an anecdote to the evil in our world and a stimulus to service. After over 50 verses dealing primarily with prophecy, I Corinthians 15:58 tells us that we should therefore be "...always abounding in the work of the Lord..." II Peter 3:11 and 13 says, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness...Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." In I Timothy 6:14 we read, "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." I John 3:3 exhorts us, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." When we live with a clear vision of the coming of Christ, we shall be purified.

III. Prophecy says "Amen!" to the truth of the Bible

God challenges the false religions in Isaiah 41:21-29: "Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, 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).

In chapters 44 and 45 of Isaiah, King Cyrus of Persia is mentioned by name in approximately 700 BC. He was born sometime around 600 to 580 BC. He did not begin his conquest until 550 BC, yet God names him specifically as the one who would allow the Jews to return back to their land. The prophecy was given 160 years before it happened!

In Daniel 9:25-27 God promises seventy weeks of prophecy to Israel. God used King Artaxerxes to make a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of Messiah, the Prince would be a 69 set of 7 years. If you take the 69 sets of 7 years using the 360-day Jewish prophetic calendar, you will come up with 173,880 days. March 5, 444 BC when the decree was made to restore Jerusalem by Artaxerxes Longimanus to March 30, AD 33, the day Jesus rides into Jerusalem for His triumphant entry, is exactly 173,880 days. This is one reason I believe the Bible records soon after the death and resurrection of Christ, "...a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7b). Those who studied the Scriptures could not deny the fulfillment to the very day!

IV. Prophecy reminds us that God is in Charge

Prophecy reassures us that God is in control and thus gives us peace of mind.

Christ told us that we have no need to have troubled hearts because He is preparing a place for us and will come again to receive us to Himself in John 14:1-

4. In the book of the Revelation, eight times God is called the Almighty. Five of those times He is called Lord God Almighty and this is the only time this full title is given to the Lord in all of Scripture. The Greek word is "Pantokrator." "Pantas" means all or everything. "Krator" means to hold in your hand. This title of our Lord means that He has everything in His hands or to put it another way, He has His hands over everything. No wonder after the Lord promises us He will come again for us in I Thessalonians 4:16 and 17, he says, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:18).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.