



Why is Bible prophecy important?

(2 Peter 1:16-21) "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

The main theme of these scriptures is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Peter tells us that he as well as James and John had a preview of what it would be like. For them the Second Coming of Jesus would not be something secret and hidden but an event of splendor and brilliance that the whole world would see. Indeed the apostle John confirmed this.

(Revelation 1:7) "Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen."

Yet it is a sad reality that multitudes of believers today in many churches have little or no knowledge at all about what the Bible actually teaches about the Last Days and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Many actually scoff at those who take Bible prophecy seriously but Peter had something to say about that kind of attitude.

(2 Peter 3:3-8) "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' He promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."

God measures time differently from us. For Him a thousand of our years are like a day. The tragedy in many churches today is that the interest in the Second Coming of Jesus is at an all time low. Around twenty to thirty years ago in the Church there was a lot more interest in Bible Prophecy than there is now. In fact Jesus Second Coming is even closer now

and there is less interest today than there was back then.

Many are into Kingdom Now and prosperity theology while others believe that God has finished with Israel and that the Church has replaced Israel. Some choose to ignore Bible prophecy saying, "Prophecy is too hard to understand and we don't really need it." However, when you look at the conditions in the world and what is happening in the Middle East you cannot afford to ignore Bible prophecy and you most certainly can't say that we don't need it. If you do then you do it to your own peril!

When we look at what Peter says about the Second Coming of Jesus we can see five reasons why Bible Prophecy is important. Now lets look at the text itself in Second Peter chapter one commencing from Verse sixteen through to verse twenty.

1. Prophecy in Scripture is not something that the apostles made up themselves.

(Vs 16-18) "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain."

This event is recorded in Matthew and Mark's gospels. *(Matt 17:1-8)(Luke 9:34-35)* It was a magnificent and event that filled the apostles with a sense of awe and terror causing them to fall to the ground. They did not fall back into some euphoric state but fell facedown in the presence of a Holy and righteous God.

Through this event they knew what Jesus Second Coming would be like. In fact Peter wanted to build three booths for Jesus, Moses and Elijah because he thought Jesus was about to inaugurate His Millennial reign.

When you consider an experience like this it would be hard to fake this kind of encounter. Also Peter said that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus shining with the same splendor and brilliance. This experience also relates to what will happen to believers at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Moses represents those believers who physically die in this life while Elijah represents those believers who are still alive on earth. The bodies of those who have died as well as the bodies of those are still living at the time will all be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming.

The rapture and the resurrection are the same event. Both Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in glory and so will we whether we die or are still alive at Jesus coming. Either way we will be caught up! So this event was not something that the apostles made up themselves.

2. Prophecy in Scripture is surer than an experience or even an eyewitness account.

(Vs 19a) "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain and you will do well to pay attention to it..."

Personal revelation and experience must never override the Word of God. Peter understood this and makes it very clear. Every spiritual experience, doctrine, revelation and manifestation must always be subject to and tested by God's Word. If it does not agree with scripture then it does not come from the Lord. God will never deny what He has said in

His Word. We must test all things with the Word of God. The Bereans did this.

(Acts 17:11) "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

Tragically the spirit of the Bereans has, by and large, disappeared from the Church today and especially where Bible prophecy is concerned.

3. Prophecy in Scripture is a light shining in a dark place.

(Vs 19b)... "as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

Today the world is a dark place and getting darker. Multitudes who are pursuing materialism and the so-called 'good things' in life are unaware of what is coming on the world. To some degree all of us in the western nations are inoculated against the terrible acts of violence and injustice in our world through the media especially through the TV. We see terrorist acts and people dying but remain insulated and in our deep minds thinking it will never happen here.

However, when you consider 9/11 it became very clear that no nation is immune from terrorist attacks. In fact just before the Lord Jesus returns the whole world will be in crisis and nations will not know the way out. The Lord Jesus said this would happen and what He said was in the context of the very last days just before He returns again.

(Luke 21:25-28) "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be

shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

If we are eagerly waiting for the Lord Jesus to come then when we see these things happening we will not be afraid because we know that our redemption is coming soon. If we do not have a basic understanding of Bible prophecy then we will only see darkness and confusion and will not be ready for His return.

Today millions around the world have little or no hope for the future and millions of Christians do not have a clue as to what is really happening in the world today. They will only see what the media wants them to see. Many are like the ostrich, which buries its head in the ground being oblivious to what is happening around it. In reality many Christians do not want to see what is going on in the world today and in many cases deliberately ignore the reality of this present age.

In the last days of Ancient Rome when the empire was in the process of being destroyed the emperors and the politicians put on entertainment for the people. There were plays, bazaars, theatre, entertainment, magic shows, religious displays and gladiatorial combat in the arena. Also it was a society intoxicated with sex, sport and the preservation and worship of the physical body. Every pleasure and possession was available and the people went about their daily lives totally unaware of the barbarians descending on the empire.

Is it any different in the western nations today? Islam is on the move and has 'Trojan horses' in the west. There is already a 'fifth column' that is working to destroy the west from within. 'Babylon the Great' is ready to burn!

As things get progressively darker the only hope for anyone will be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. If we have this hope in our hearts then we will be secure in the will of God even if all hell breaks loose around us!

This hope will be *"the morning star rising in our hearts."*

In the North African Desert there is a star that rises in the desert called the morning star. It appears just before the dawn of a new day. It is so bright that you think the dawn has come but it hasn't, however, when you see this star you know that the dawn is rapidly approaching. So it is with Bible prophecy. The hope of Jesus return will be the only light especially when we enter that time of great tribulation soon to engulf the whole world at the end of this present age. The Lord Jesus spoke about this time. (Matthew 24:21-22) *"For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equalled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened."*

4. All prophecy has its origin in God Himself who reveals it through the Holy Spirit.

(Vs 20-21) *"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

(Is 46:10) *"I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please"*.

These days in the Church we have an over abundance of prophets prophesying blessing and prosperity yet avoiding the

weightier matters of the law such as repentance and persevering faith in the face of coming persecution and affliction.

It is an established fact that people like Benny Hinn, Kim Clement, and many others are always making predictions that do not come true. Many prophets who get it wrong say, *"We prophesy in part"* meaning that they will be partly right and partly wrong but it is taken out of all reasonable context. Paul did not even mean that. What he said was in the context of Jesus Second Coming when prophecy and all other gifts will no longer be needed because, *"the perfect will have come"* i.e., the Day of the Lord.

In fact the Bible clearly says that what a person says in the name of the Lord will come to pass exactly as he has said or else he is a false prophet. This is why teaching Bible prophecy can be a spiritual minefield. When trying to understand Biblical prophecy we must always start with studying the Bible. This is what Daniel was doing when the Lord revealed His Word to him.

The scripture itself says, *"that we must not go beyond what is written"* and again God's Word says, *"If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him"*(Deut 18:22).

The Old Testament prophets were always a 100% accurate in what they foretold in the name of the Lord. What they predicted in the Lord's Name always came true. They did not take liberties with God's Word but only said what they were told to say. On the other hand the false prophets were prophesying either out of their own imaginations or by evil spirits and always telling people what they wanted to hear instead of what they needed to hear.

Neither the Old Testament prophets or the apostles made up the Bible but spoke and wrote as the Holy Spirit moved them. When you look at the Bible there is a wonderful harmony in all of its books even though they were written hundreds of years apart and by different authors.

The Bible tells us that false prophecy and teaching will be a conspicuous feature of the last days.

(2 Tim 4:3-4) "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

Some of these people today claim encounters with the Lord and all kinds of visions and experiences that not even the apostles had themselves. Even though Paul was caught up to the third heaven it was a unique experience and in the context of his ministry.

Today there are those who actually boast of their revelations and visions and they cannot prove these things. In many cases if not in most cases they are prophesying the delusions of their own imaginations. That's what God Himself said about the false prophets in the days of Jeremiah.

(Jeremiah 5:31 14:14) "The prophets prophecy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and My people love it this way. But what will you do in the end? The prophets are prophesying lies in My name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds."

This is what is going on in the Church today! These people are making up stories that captivate and enchant the peo-

ple of God. They are in the character of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel or like the false prophets with a lying spirit in their mouths deceiving king Ahab. It is no different today!

In fact not all supernatural acts are from God and even if there are genuine miracles signs and wonders it does not necessarily validate a persons ministry. Did not King Solomon continue to prophesy even after he had backslidden? The Lord Jesus Himself had something to say about this.

(Matthew 7:21-23) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

If you look at the context of what the Lord Jesus said these people did not have the fruit of the Spirit nor were they doing His will. They were in reality 'wolves in sheep's clothing' and "Shepherds who feed only themselves."

5. Prophecy is also important because it is a primary motive for holy living.

When you look at the passages from the Bible speaking about holiness and righteousness of character many of them are connected to the Second Coming of Christ. The Bible is very clear that the Lord Jesus is coming for a spotless bride that has made herself ready.

(Revelation 19:5-8) "Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear Him, both small and great!" Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thun-

der, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)"

Do you think that a prospective husband would welcome a dirty, unclean bride who doesn't really love him or care for him and can't even be bothered dressing herself appropriately for the wedding?

Well multitudes of professing Christians are not ready for the bridegroom. They are like Lot's wife whose heart and life was enslaved to this world and she perished in the flames. So it will be when the earth and everything in it is burned up at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! In the light of God's Word we must make every effort to keep our lives pure.

(2 Pet 3: 10-14) "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be burned up (laid bare). Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives, as you look forward to the day of God and speed it's coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him."

(1 John 3: 2-3) "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be have not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

We must not ignore the prophecies of Jesus because God will hold us accountable if we do. Multitudes of ministers and Church leaders today are ignoring the prophetic aspect of God's Word. Many no longer teach the doctrine of the last things consequently they are not prepared for the Lord's return and neither are their congregations. Such is the spirit of Laodacia that pervades the Church in these days.

Do you ever hear Robert Schuler, Bill Hybells, Rick Warren, Nicky Gumball and many others into the mega church movement ever do any kind of serious teaching about the Lord's return? No it is all kingdom now and dominion in this world! It is all hype and prosperity! If we do not take the words of Jesus seriously then we will reap the consequences!

There are many who say that they love Jesus but do not love His Word. This in itself is a dichotomy because Jesus is the Living Word of God made flesh and the co-author of the Bible along with His Father and the Holy Spirit. If you do not love the Bible you do not love Jesus and if you say you love Him but do not listen to what He says in His Word then you have a different Jesus and not the One that the Bible reveals to us!

(Acts 3:22-23) "For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything He tells you. Anyone who does not listen to Him will be completely cut off from the people.'" (Deut 18:18-19)

Prophecy is a unique feature of the Bible and the mark that He is the true God.

(Isaiah 42:9) "See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

(Isaiah 46:10) "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is to