

Christ in Prophecy

Pre-Trib 31: Is Prophecy a "Distraction?"

© 2015 Lamb & Lion Ministries. All Rights Reserved.
For a video of this show, please visit <http://www.lamblion.com>.

Opening

Dr. Reagan: One of America's best known and most popular pastors has declared that the study of Bible prophecy is a distraction. What about it? Is it a waste of time to study Bible prophecy? Is the subject appropriate only for fanatics? Or, can it be green pastures for believers? Does it have any relevance for the here and now, or is it just pie-in-the-sky? Stay tuned for the opinions of 17 Bible prophecy experts.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. For the past two weeks I have been sharing with you the opinions of Bible prophecy experts on a variety of questions regarding the signs of the times and the nation of Israel. If you have missed those programs, you can find them on our website at lamblion.com or on internet sites like HisChannel.com or Light Source.com. This week I want to continue with my interviews of Bible prophecy experts, and my question to them will be: "Is the study of Bible prophecy a time-wasting distraction?" This question is prompted by the fact that one of America's best known and most popular pastors has declared Bible prophecy to be a "distraction." Let's consider the responses of our Bible prophecy experts to this declaration.

Part 2: Prophecy Experts

David Hocking: Well I appreciate the question. I happen to live close by that person. And I've confronted him, so, I know him. But, he uses a passage in Acts chapter 1 to prove his point and once again as we often see we forget that Peter said, "No prophecy of the Scriptures have any private interpretation." But he takes the liberty to privately interpret a passage that does not refer to what he said, and that's sad to me. The fact is that prophecy is honored especially by the Apostle Peter. He tells us how important it is for believers today to understand what God is doing and that holy men of God spake as they were moved or carried along by the Holy Spirit. I think we need to stick with the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible.

Andy Woods: Well if Bible prophecy is a distraction God made a big mistake I guess because 27% of His own Word; that is over a quarter was prophetic at the time it was written. And if we are to be ministers of the full council of the Word of God then at some point we have to be

talking about Bible prophecy since it's revealed in a huge section of Scripture. I think it's the exact opposite. I think it's the world that is distracting us; you know the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, the pride of life and Paul talked about how we need our minds transformed away from the pattern of the world. And the way that happens is through prophecy which reminds us about what's important. Because prophecy tells us only two things are going to make it from this life into the next and that's the Word of God because, "The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever." And the souls of men and women. And so obviously why rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic? Let's focus on the two things that are going to last. So I think the world is distracting us and prophecy gets us centered.

Allan Walker: Bible prophecy when it is taught in a balanced way is not a distraction, it is an integral part of the whole council of God's Word. We must hold to the fundamentals of the faith and to Bible prophecy which by the way makes up about a third of Scripture. If we have a Bible based agenda for ministry then we will have lasting answers for the problems that people have and not a manmade answer.

August Rosado: Well, if it's a distraction then God wants us distracted. One-fourth of the Bible deals with prophecy from Genesis all the way to the book of Revelation. So, God says there is a blessing for those who study prophecy. All one has to do is read Revelation 1:3, "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." But also on the flip side of the coin there is a warning for those who neglect the study of Bible prophecy, 2 Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." So for one to say that prophecy is a distraction it is a good distraction. God wants us distracted He wants us to study prophecy.

Don Perkins: My response is the Bible says in 2 Peter 1:19-21 that we have a more sure Word of prophecy. The Bible says that the Word of God, Bible prophecy it is a light in dark places. You know Bible prophecy is not a distraction I mean it gives light in areas that we don't know. I mean who would read a book start with the beginning of the book, read the middle of the book and then throw the book away? No, by the end of that book you want to know the end of the story. Well Bible prophecy gives us the end of the story. It's not a distraction it gives us answers in regards to what God is going to do. So, to make that statement to me, really shows his lack of understanding of Bible prophecy.

Al Gist: Well Bible prophecy is anything but a distraction; Bible prophecy is one of the greatest tools of evangelism that we have. It tells unbelievers that they don't have much time they better get their life right with the Lord because He is coming soon. For the Church it teaches us holiness, it teaches us a standard of living that is commenced with what the Bible says God's people should be. And one of my favorite Scriptures about prophecy is found in 2 Peter chapter 1 where it says in verse 19 we have also a more sure word of prophecy where unto you would do well that you take heed. Now that pastor needs to pay close to that because God Word says we need to pay close attention to Bible prophecy it's a more sure Word.

Don McGee: I find that one of the astounding things that's happening. To have someone take a whole section of the Bible and say that it is a distraction indicates to me a sign of immaturity at best, and a sign of conceit, I am going to use that word, that is a strong word at worse. To say that you can take 25-30% of the Bible and say that is distracting we don't really need that is a

terrible, terrible thing. It reminds me of a young wife who is waiting for her long deployed husband and she receives a phone call and says he is going to arrive at any minute and she would look at that phone call as a distraction from her Pokemo game.

Bill Salus: I think that kind of comment in the end times is a fulfillment of Bible prophecy because we were told that there would come a time--and this is in the 2 Timothy 4:3-4 that there will come a time when they will no longer listen to sound doctrine. They will have itching ears they will heap up speakers that they want, teachers that they want. So, basically that does not surprise me we are living in an apostate period of time. The problem with that though is that by denying prophecy which is about a third of the Bible you are taking away a great witnessing tool for the Church. I came to know the Lord through Bible prophecy. I was attending a Chuck Missler Bible study on the book of Revelation and I was so astounded that God knew the end from the beginning that caught my attention. And prophecy is an ability to witness and there are so many things going on right now, so many prophecies converging that you know it is a witnessing tool. Revelation 19:10, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Worship God it says before that because the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. So God telling us the end from the beginning because He loves us should prompt us to want to love Him, receive Him, and worship Him, and serve Him.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: I hope you are finding the answers of our Bible prophecy experts to be as interesting as I did when I interviewed them. They have been responding to the question, "Is the study of Bible prophecy a time-wasting distraction?" Believe it or not, this question was prompted by a proclamation of one of our nation's best-known and most popular pastors who declared that he considered the study of Bible prophecy to be a "distraction." Well, thus far, I have shared with you the responses of 8 of the 17 Bible prophecy experts I interviewed regarding this question, and all 8 have provided us with some very good reasons why the study of Bible prophecy is essential to Christian growth. One of the points they have made over and over is that one-fourth to one-third of the Bible is prophetic in nature, and therefore God Himself must consider prophecy to be important. They have also emphasized the point that the Bible itself tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequately, equipped for every good work. Let's return now to the remaining answers of our Bible prophecy experts.

Part 4: Prophecy Experts

Gary Fisher: Well God didn't get the memo; 25-30% of the Bible is Bible prophecy. Jesus said when you see these things beginning to take place straighten up, lift up your heads. If it's not important, the Bible prophecy elements, why did He write that? The theme verse of Lion of Judah Ministries, Hebrews 10:25, "Encourage each other and so much the more as you see the day approaching." We have no tool available to us except Bible prophecy; the prophetic portion of God's Word to even know where we are on God's calendar. How would we see the day

approaching if we didn't know how to recognize it through the prophetic part of the Word? Then there is also the elements of the prophetic elements of our redemption drawing near and all of that. So, we are without hope without the prophetic nature of the Word. It is far from irrelevant, it is a necessary part of the Word to keep us trudging on toward this thing called the Millennium. And I'm ready for it, I don't know about you.

Michael Norten: He could have said Jesus Christ is a distraction because in Revelation 19:10 it says that Jesus Christ the testimony of Christ is the spirit of prophecy. And 25% of the Bible is prophecy when it was written. And it is an incredible statement. So instead of saying Bible prophecy is a distraction it should say it is an attraction; it attracts us to the Savior and gives us hope, it gives us motivation, and it gives us comfort.

Terry James: Well if that is the case then God must have been totally distracted, when He wrote probably 27 or had men write 27% of the Bible being prophecy, then He was totally distracted. Jesus must have been very distracted when He was on the Mount of Olives and He answered the questions of the disciples: What will be the sign of the coming, the end of the age? And He was very distracted He gave very precise, very delineated items. And He must have had us totally distracted as Christians because He says, "What I say to one I say to all, watch." We are told to watch. Well watch what? Watch the prophecies that He had just laid out and we see that in chapter 24 of Matthew and other places. So, God Himself is distracted and so He must want us to be distracted about all that prophecy. It is ludicrous, it is just nonsensical and part of the apostasy.

Randall Price: Well of course it is a distraction if people think that Bible prophecy takes away from evangelism, or takes away from godly living or the family, or all the issues that we think are so important. But of course in fact in the Scriptures this was the incentive for evangelism. It is quite clear that blessed hope was before the Church it's tied in Titus 2:11-13, and then verse 14 says, "Be zealous for good deeds." It is the people who are looking, and I say living in the light of Christ's coming. We are to live looking. So this whole idea realizing that life is short, that our opportunity to bring the Gospel is also short. That there is a world that is perishing and that Christ could come at any moment that is the incentive to reach out. The same thing with godly living the fact is that if Christ is coming--and I used to tell my children when I would go on trips I'd say, "You know I want you to keep your room clean when I come back if you've done a good job we will give you some sort of prize or present." But they never knew when I was coming so they would look out the window sometimes and say--but you know when the car drove into the driveway it was too late to shove everything under the bed, they had to be ready. So, our lives are that way. Someone said it is as though Christ died yesterday, was buried today, and is coming tomorrow. It is that short in God's viewpoint. And if we adopt that kind of mentality, we say--we as 1 John 3 says you know we are going to be changed and those who have that pure hope in him who is pure purifies themselves. We live in accordance to the one who we hope and love. So, I think that if pastors had a correct understanding of the purpose of prophecy, the very practical purpose of prophecy they would never think that it was a distraction but a great aid for all the things they want to accomplish.

Brian Thomas: God must of wanted us to have a lot of distractions because He placed lots of prophecy in the Bible. Nearly a third of the Bible is Bible prophecy. And I think pastors are just doing a great disservice to their congregations when they choose to ignore Bible prophecy, because what hope, what true hope can one have if you take away Bible prophecy? For example think of a person who has lost a loved one who is a Christian that person has died, you

can have great hope, and the grieving is not so devastating when you know that at the return of Christ prophecy says that person will be resurrected, they will rise again and you will be reunited. And I've heard pastors say many things such as they must focus on issues of today like immorality with children, rebellious children, problems in marriages, unemployment. But what better hope can you give a person then to say when Christ returns instantly all these problems will come to an end. So I say to those pastors, Bible prophecy is not a distraction Bible prophecy is where we get hope, we get incentive that we can keep pressing forward even through the struggles of today.

Nathan Jones: How could 31% of the Bible which is about Bible prophecy; God wants us to know the future, be a distraction? Because Bible prophecy tells us one that Jesus wins; the Bible has given us Jesus' victory we know how it's going to end, and through Jesus, two, we win, we win through Christ. And three we know evil loses. Now those are the three main topics of the Bible so how in the world could Bible prophecy be a distraction when it is about Jesus victory and our victory through Jesus and Satan losing? I am excited about that and that should get everybody excited.

Ed Hindson: Well I think Bible prophecy taken out of its proper context can become a distraction in the sense that if all your focused on is the Second Coming and you forget your responsibility to preach the Gospel, build the Church, evangelize the world, make a difference in the world in which we live then in that sense for some people it is a distraction. They become such prophetic fanatics that all they want to talk about, think about, read about, study about is Bible prophecy. But on the other hand when one-fourth of the Bible is prophetic in nature and if we are going to preach the whole counsel of God then we need to be preaching the message of Bible prophecy. The book of Revelation ends with Jesus saying, "I Jesus, sent my angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." Jesus meant for prophecy to be preached in the Church so in that sense it's not a distraction at all. It is to focus our attention on the hope of the coming of Christ so that the believer keeps an eye on the sky, you're always living in anticipation of the fact that Jesus could come today. So, I make my decisions, my values, my choices on that basis that I don't have years, and years, and years necessarily to get ready to serve God I need to be doing it right now today because I don't know how much time is left. At the same time we're warned, don't set any dates for the Second Coming we don't know how much time is left. So I like to remind people don't waste your time trying to guess the time, be ready all the time, because Jesus could come at any time, and that will keep you properly balanced. An eye on the sky but your feet on the earth. I have a job to do in the meantime. I've got to keep my heart right with God. And I think Jesus made that clear in Matthew 24 keep watching for me to come, verse 42, eye on the sky. Verse 44 be ready for me to come have your heart right with God and with one another. And then in verse 46 and keep serving me until I come. So we want to fulfill the great predication, build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. We want to fulfill the Great Commission go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all nations and make disciples of all nations. But we also want to fulfill with great sense of urgency be ready for me to come, live in anticipation of that fact that I could come soon. Because whether Jesus comes in your lifetime or not the day will come that either the trumpet will sound, the archangel will shout and whoosh we are out of here to the glory of God; or you and I will step into eternity face to face with the Savior. I'd rather meet Him one day face to face saying I was living in anticipation of the fact that you were coming soon because one of these days He will come. The Scriptures says quickly, suddenly, unexpectedly, like a thief in the night Jesus will race in at the last moment snatch the Church away, take the bride home to the

marriage in heaven to the glory of God and to the fulfillment of the message of Bible prophecy. And in that sense it's never a distraction.

Tim LaHaye: He must have gone to one of these modern cemeteries they call seminaries and many churches get their brainwashed teaching and he may be a good speaker. You see there is a difference between a communicator, a good communicator that is popular and interesting to listen to and someone who takes the Bible literally. If he doesn't take the Bible literally how can he make any kind of sense out of prophecy or the teachings of prophecy? But the Bible is full of prophecies. In fact Dr. Walvoord has cited in his book on prophecy knowledge at the end times he's listed over 1,100 prophecies in the Bible half of which have already been fulfilled literally. Which means the other half that have to do with end time prophecies will also be fulfilled literally.

Jobe Martin: Bible prophecy is a distraction? Yeah, could well be if you really believe it. It distracts you from the things of the world like if Jesus could come for me like right now what am I doing with my life? And so, yes, I want to have every minute count for Him. And I think Bible prophecy is a good motivation for godly living. It's a good thing to help us fear the Lord. And it helps us to walk in a manner worthy of Him so that we can please Him in all respects. And bear fruit in every good work, and then keep on increasing in the knowledge of God.

Part 5

Dr. Reagan: Well, there you have it the answers of 17 Bible prophecy experts in response to the question, "Is the study of Bible prophecy a time-wasting distraction?"

Let me give you some personal reasons why I believe it is important to study Bible prophecy. And the first is the quantity of it. As all our experts pointed out, one-third to one-fourth of the Bible is prophetic in nature. This one point alone justifies our paying attention to what Bible prophecy says.

A second reason for studying Bible prophecy is its uniqueness. The Bible contains hundreds of fulfilled prophecies about peoples, cities, nations and empires. And in contrast, there are no fulfilled prophecies in the Koran, the Hindu Vedas or the Book of Mormon.

A third reason for studying Bible prophecy is that it validates the Bible as the inspired Word of God. What other explanation is there for the fact that the Bible contains so many specific prophecies about the future that have been fulfilled in detail?

A fourth reason for studying Bible prophecy is that it validates Jesus as who He said He was namely, God in the flesh. The evidence here is just simply overwhelming. Consider, for example, these facts: First there are approximately 330 prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the First Coming of the Messiah, many are repetitive, 109 are separate and distinct, the odds of just seven being fulfilled accidentally in someone's life are 1 in 10 to the 17th power. Folks, that's the number 1 with 17 zeros after it that's a lot of zeros! That's one in one hundred quadrillion!

Folks, these are not random numbers that I have just pulled out of the sky. These are computations by a man named Peter Stoner who was a professor of physics at universities in

California. And he presented them in a book titled, "Science Speaks." Professor Stoner illustrated his probability computations by using the State of Texas. He said that one in ten to the 17th power can be illustrated by filling the State of Texas knee-deep in silver dollars. Then he said, fly over the state and flip out of the airplane window one silver dollar with a black check mark on it. Next, turn loose about 10,000 bulldozers into the sea of silver dollars and let them get the coins mixed up very well. And finally, lead a blind-folded man to the border of the state and let him start walking across. The odds that when he picks up the first silver dollar it will have a black check mark on it is one in ten to the 17th power!

Let me give you just one example of those 109 prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. You'll find it in Psalm 22:16 it says the Messiah will die by having His hands and feet pierced. Folks, that psalm was written by David 1,000 years before Jesus was born. At the time he wrote it, the Jewish method of execution was by stoning. One thousand years later, the Jewish method of execution was still by stoning, but the Jews could not execute anyone because they were under Roman rule. And guess what? The Roman method of execution was by crucifixion. And thus Jesus was executed by having His hands and feet pierced, just as was prophesied.

A fifth reason for studying Bible prophecy is because it is a great tool of evangelism. You know folks, I can't begin to tell you how many people have told me that they were converted to Jesus through their study of Bible prophecy. Hal Lindsey says that he has received thousands of letters from people telling him of their Christian conversions through the reading of his Bible prophecy book, "The Late Great Planet Earth." The effectiveness of using Bible prophecy as a tool of evangelism was demonstrated by the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost when he preached the very first Gospel sermon. That sermon was nothing from beginning to end but a recitation of prophecies followed by a declaration that Jesus had fulfilled them.

A sixth reason for studying Bible prophecy is that it can serve as a great tool of moral teaching. I wish I had the time to develop this point, but I don't. Just start reading the prophets and you'll find them talking constantly about the sins of hypocrisy, immorality, and injustice. They talked more about the here-and-now than they ever did about the future.

A seventh reason for studying Bible prophecy is that it can serve as a stimulus for spiritual growth. It provides hope, it inspires evangelism, it motivates holiness. These very practical, down-to-earth consequences prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Bible prophecy is relevant to the here-and-now. It is not just some sort of pie-in-the-sky academic study.

An eighth reason for studying Bible prophecy is that it provides understanding of current national and international events. Folks, there is just no way you can understand the conflicts in the Middle East, or the apostasy that is raging in the Church, or the collapse of our society into immorality and violence without some knowledge of end time Bible prophecy where all these terrible events are prophesied in detail.

My friends, all of God's Word is profitable. And that includes God's Prophetic Word. So, read it, study it, and be blessed by it! And then share it with others. I hope this program has been a blessing to you, and I hope you will join us again next week when once again I will interview our 17 Bible prophecy experts, asking them the question, "What do you think is the message of Bible prophecy today to both believers and unbelievers? Well, that's our program for this week. Until next week, the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program