

Christ in Prophecy
Prophecy 6: “The Importance of Bible Prophecy”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Why do so many Christians avoid Bible prophecy? Why are some even frightened of it? And why do many feel that it makes no difference whatsoever as to what you believe about prophecy. Is Bible prophecy worth studying? Or should it be put on the shelf and forgotten?

Program

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. This is the second in a series of programs on the fundamentals of Bible prophecy. In our first program we took a look at the way Bible prophecy has been ignored and the many ways in which it's been abused. In this second program we're going to take a look at the importance of prophecy and we are going to see that there are some very important reasons why every Christian should be interested in studying God's prophetic Word.

I sincerely hope that after you view this program you will never again be apathetic about Bible prophecy. And I pray too that you will be motivated to dig into it as never before to discover the marvelous promises that God has made to believers concerning the future. In 1 Corinthians 2:9 the apostle Paul wrote these words “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has the mind of man conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” But the very next verse says that God has revealed those things through His Spirit. They are revealed in His prophetic Word and they are exciting.

My topic is the importance of Bible prophecy and I'd like to begin immediately with a key verse, 2 Peter 3:16, “All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” And my theme throughout this presentation is going to be that that verse means exactly what it says, all Scripture. That's the Old Testament, that's the New Testament, that's the history books, the poetry

books, the major, the Minor Prophets, the New Testament books, it includes the gospels and it certainly includes Bible prophecy. And yet as I pointed out in my last presentation, there is no part of God's word that has been more abused and ignored than the beginning of the Bible, and the end of the Bible. Than the story of creation, and the story of the end times and the promises that God has made there concerning the end times. In this presentation I want to give you a number of reasons why I believe with all my heart that every Christian should be involved in the study of Bible prophecy. Why every pastor should include some teaching about Bible prophecy in his yearly schedule of preaching. Bible prophecy is very important to the development of a Christian personality.

The first reason I want to give is the quantity of Bible prophecy. Just the quantity itself makes it important. Most people are shocked to find out that one fourth to one third of the Bible is prophetic in nature. Stop to think for a moment, in the Old Testament, you have the Major Prophets, you have the Minor Prophets, but what most people forget is that almost every Psalm is prophetic in nature and that is a huge amount of literature in the Old Testament. And also, in the historical books there are prophetic passages. In the New Testament, entire books like 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Revelation are prophetic in nature, and then there are huge prophetic passages like Matthew 24, Luke 21, and 2 Peter chapter 3. We should be studying Bible prophecy because it would be improper to take one fourth to one third of God's Word and simply put it on the shelf and forget about it.

The second reason is the uniqueness of Bible prophecy. It is very, very unique. I don't know if you've ever thought about this or not, but the Bible is the only book in the world that contains fulfilled prophecies. There is not one fulfilled prophecy in the sayings of Buddha there is not one fulfilled prophecy in the Koran. Not one. There is not one fulfilled prophecy in the Hindu Vedas. There is not one fulfilled prophecy in the Book of Mormon, not a single one. But in the Bible, there are literally hundreds of fulfilled prophecies, and I'm not just talking about Messianic prophecies. I'm talking about prophecies about cities, about nations, about individuals. Prophecy after prophecy after prophecy that has been fulfilled in history. A false God cannot predict the future a false god does not know what's gonna happen in this future. And Isaiah made this point. In Isaiah chapter 41 he says, "Can your idols make such claims as these? Let them come and show what they can do, says God the king of Israel." He's taunting the idolaters.

He's taunting those who are bowing down in front of totem poles. And he's saying if your totem pole is a God, have your totem pole tell me what's gonna happen in the future. Let them try to tell us what occurred in years gone by, or what the future holds. Yes, that's it. If you are gods tell what will happen in the days ahead. Only Yahweh, the God of the universe, the One who created this universe, the One who gave us the Bible. Only He knows the future, only He has the audacity to proclaim it.

There was a third reason that we should be studying Bible prophecy, and that is that it validates scripture. Prophecy attests to the supernatural origin of the Bible. I recently had the opportunity to interview Dr. Charles Ryrie, the renowned author of the *Ryrie Study Bible*. And I asked him, we were talking about the Bible, and I asked him, I said "If you could only give one piece of evidence that the Bible really is the Word of God what would you point to?" And he smiled and said, "Well, something that you will enjoy. I would say Bible prophecy." He said, "It proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Bible is supernatural in origin. That the Bible really came from God, because it contains fulfilled prophecies."

Let me point out a few to you. In Isaiah chapter 13, Isaiah makes a remarkable prophecy. He prophesies that Babylon will become a great world empire and will fall to the Mede-Persians. At the time he wrote that the world empire was the Assyrian Empire, not Babylon. Babylon had not even become an empire, but he said. "It will! And one day it will fall to the Mede-Persians." And that's exactly what happened, that had to be supernatural in origin. Or consider Micah 3:12. In Micah 3:12 Micah prophesies that a day is coming soon when Jerusalem will be destroyed and so completely destroyed the temple will be destroyed and he says the temple mount will be plowed like a field for harvest. That was a hundred years before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians and the temple mount was plowed after the temple was destroyed. Or consider Jeremiah 29:10, Jeremiah said the Babylonian captivity will last a period of 70 years. Later on during the captivity, Daniel was given the scroll of Jeremiah and when he read that it was going to last 70 years, he stopped and he calculated how long they had been in captivity and he discovered that they can been in captivity 69 years. That's when he got on his knees and prayed one of the greatest prayers in the Bible, in Daniel chapter 9, where he said, "Lord God, I know you're a God who keeps promises." And he said, "I know you're gonna keep this promise, but we have not repented, so I am going to take

the sins of the nation upon myself and I am going to repent for our sins so that you can be faithful to your promise.” And God kept his promise, he sent them home after 70 years.

Or consider these two remarkable passages, in Isaiah 44 and Isaiah 45, where Isaiah says that not only will they go into Babylonian captivity but he says the Babylonian captivity will be ended by a man named Cyrus. And that is exactly the person who ended the captivity and these two prophecies were both written 150 years before Cyrus was even born. This has to be supernatural knowledge.

Of course the greatest example we could give from the Old Testament is one that probably all of you know very well. And that’s from Daniel 2, where Nebuchadnezzar had a dream he couldn’t remember and Daniel said, “Well I can tell you what the dream was, you saw this great statue and it had a golden head and had silver chest and bronze hips and iron legs and it had feet of iron and clay. It had very weak feet, the whole thing about to topple.” And he said, “Let me tell you what this is.” He said, “You sir, you are the golden head, the Babylonian Empire, and you’re gonna be overthrown, you’re gonna be overthrown by the silver empire which will be the empire of Mede-Persia. And then they will be overthrown by the brass empire which will be the empire of Greece. And then will come the great and strong empire that will be in two segments, the eastern and western, the Roman Empire. And the feet represent the final gentile empire of history, an empire that will be totally unstable, a loose confederation, and it will be cracked in one day and destroyed when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.” This man told history in advance better than some people have written about history after the event, it was amazing. And yet all of this was supernatural in nature. There is no other way he could have had this particular knowledge. You see what I mean when I say that Bible prophecy validates the Scriptures as the Word of God.

In like manner, there’s another reason we should be studying Bible prophecy and that is that it validates Jesus as who He said He was. Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh, and there is no greater proof I know of that Jesus was truly who He said He was than the evidence of Bible prophecy. Over and over and over Jesus fulfilled Bible prophecy. Let me give you some examples, some remarkable ones. Micah 5:2, this was written about 700 years before Jesus was born, and you know what it says? It says, “The Messiah will

be born in Bethlehem Ephrata.” I suggest you go read that some time because most people never notice that it says, “Bethlehem Ephrata.” Now why did he say that? Why did he say Bethlehem Ephrata? Because there were two Bethlehems in Israel at that time, one up near the Sea of Galilee and one down south of Jerusalem. It would be like if I asked you where you were born, and you said Springfield. I’d have to ask you another question because there’s a Springfield in almost every state of the union. There’s Springfield, Missouri, Springfield, Illinois, I’d have to say, well what state? Tell me what state. It was the same way at that time. There were two Bethlehems, and he nailed it. He nailed it precisely. He didn’t just say the Messiah was going to be born in Bethlehem, he said he will be born in Bethlehem Ephrata. A tiny village that probably had less than 200 people at the time, and that’s exactly where the Messiah was born.

Or consider this remarkable prophecy I consider this to be the most remarkable of all of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. In Psalm 22 verse 16, this prophecy was written by King David 1,000 years before Jesus was born and in his prophecy he prophesies that the Messiah will be killed by having his hands and his feet pierced. Now folks, when that prophecy was written, there was only one way of execution, and that was stoning people to death. That was the way the Jews did it. 1000 years later that was still the way the Jews executed people. They stoned them to death. But the Jews had lost the power of killing people they could not execute people because they were under Roman control and guess what? The Romans executed people through crucifixion. This prophecy was written 1,000 years before Jesus was crucified, it was written 700 years before the Roman took the concept of Crucifixion, put it into action, and began to develop it to a sophisticated level. And yet by inspiration of the Holy Spirit he said the Messiah would die by having His hands and His feet pierced.

Here’s another of these prophecies. Take the little book of Zechariah. Very short, you can read it in a few minutes. It has prophecy after prophecy after prophecy concerning the first coming of the Messiah, every one of which were literally fulfilled. It says the Messiah will come on a donkey, that He will be hailed as a king, that He will be betrayed, that He will be betrayed by a friend, that He’ll be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, that He will be lifted up, that He will be pierced, again a prophecy concerning His crucifixion. Prophecy after prophecy after prophecy. I spent seven years one time studying all these prophecies put together in a publication called the *Christ in Prophecy Study Guide*, and I

came to this conclusion. There are approximately 330 prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the first coming of the Messiah. Now many of those are repetitious. Many of them are stated over and over again, so when I went through and I called out all of the repetitious ones, I came up with the fact that there are 109 separate and distinct prophecies concerning the first coming of Jesus Christ, 109 that are separate and distinct.

Now there was a man by the name of Peter Stoner. He's dead now but at the time he was living he was quite a professor of Astrophysics, at several major universities. He was a believer. He wrote a book called, *Science Speaks* and in that book he took five of the major prophecies concerning Jesus. Five of the best known, like being born in Bethlehem or going to be crucified or going to be born of a virgin. He took five, not 109, and he calculated the odds of just five prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of one person. And he came to the conclusion very conservative, I've seen his calculations, very conservative. He came to the conclusion that the odds of just, I'm sorry seven, being fulfilled accidentally in somebody's life, is one in ten to the 17th power. That number looks like this it's one with 17 zeros after it. That's one in one hundred quadrillion. That is beyond the realm of possibility yet that's only seven prophecies, it is not 109.

When somebody says the fulfillment of prophecy is just accidental they do not know what they are talking about, because science proves that they are wrong. Well, let me give you an illustration of Peter Stoner's point. I never met Peter Stoner but I know he was a good man because he used the state of Texas to illustrate his point. Now here's what he said, he said, Let me illustrate to you what one in ten to the 17th power is." He said, "To illustrate it you must fill the state of Texas knee-deep with silver dollars." Then he said, "Take a guy and put him in an airplane and blindfold him. And just fly over the state. Whenever he wants to, let him flip a silver dollar out the window." And he says, you know, "Put a black check mark on that silver dollar." Then he says, "Take about 10 years and let bulldozers go through the state and just get those silver dollars mixed up real well. Then take that guy, put the blindfold back on him, and let him just walk into that sea of silver dollars. The odds that on the first draw he will reach down and pick up the silver dollar on the black check mark is one in ten to the 17th power." Bible prophecy validates that Jesus really was who He said He was. That He was God in the flesh.

Now there's another reason you should be studying Bible prophecy and this is one that people normally do not think of it. And that is it's a great tool of evangelism. Prophecy can be used effectively to win people to Jesus and in fact, let me tell you something. If you're ever going to try to witness to a Jewish person in particular, you better know Bible prophecy. Because first of all, a Jewish person believes it's a sin to read the New Testament or even hear the New Testament so you've got to work with the Old Testament with its Hebrew Scriptures and the best way to do it is to show him the prophecies and to show him the fulfillment of those prophecies in the life of Jesus. The Bible is full of examples of this, on the day of Pentecost. The very first gospel sermon that was ever preached by Peter was nothing in the world but Bible prophecy. He just gave prophecy after prophecy after prophecy after prophecy and he said Jesus fulfilled every one and the people were convicted in heart and cried out, "What must we do to be saved?"

Another example that comes to mind is Phillip and the Eunuch in Acts chapter 8. Phillip was given a horizontal rapture. The Holy Spirit, picked him up, moved him over, and sat him down by a road, and along came a chariot and in the chariot was a black Jew, a black Jew from Ethiopia who had been to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. And the guy stopped and the two started talking and Philip noticed he had a scroll and Philip said, "What are you reading?" and he said, "Well, I'm reading this..." and he starts quoting it, it's Isaiah 53, and Philip says, "Do you understand it?" He says, "No, I don't understand it." Isaiah 53 is one of the greatest prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the Messiah and so what did Philip do? He explained to him what that was all about, he explained to him that it was a prophecy about the Messiah and that Jesus had fulfilled it. And what happened? The man accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior was baptized immediately, went on his way rejoicing, becoming the first African convert, probably the founder of what we call today, the Coptic Church. Bible prophecy can be used very effectively in bringing people to Jesus Christ.

There's another reason to study Bible prophecy that most people don't think of, and that is it is a great tool of moral teaching. The prophetic word is a great repository of moral teaching. The prophets did not spend most of their time foretelling the future they spent most of their time foretelling the present. They spent most of their time reading the riot

act to people about social issues, particularly about religious hypocrisy and calling people to be obedient to God. They got very upset about people coming and going through all of the rituals, you know, celebrating the Sabbath, celebrating the feast, doing all that stuff, and then going home and living like a pagan. And they were trying to point out to them that what God wants is your heart not just your money and not just religious ritual. So you have great passages in the Old Testament from these prophets.

Let me give you an example, here's one from Amos chapter 5. I love Amos, he was like Harry Truman. He spit words like bullets. Here, look at what he says, "I hate, I reject your festivals. Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from me the noise of your songs, I will not even listen to the sound of your harps, but let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." He's not saying that these religious things are unimportant, he's just saying they're totally unimportant if you don't have your heart in them and if you go out and live like a pagan after you've done them. Let me show you how this will preach. Let me put it into modern language. This is the Dave Reagan paraphrase of Amos 5. I hate, I reject your gospel meetings, nor do I delight in your worship services, even though you offer up to me your tithes and offerings I will not accept them, I will not even look at your communion services. Take away from me the noise of your hymns, I will not even listen to the sound of your pianos, but let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream that'll preach, and you will find this all through the prophets, a great repository of moral teaching.

There's another reason to study Bible prophecy, something I alluded to in the first lesson in this series. And that is it's a great stimulus for spiritual growth. A study of Bible prophecy will greatly enhance your hope because the more you learn about the future and the promises that God has made about the future, the greater your hope will be. Most Christians, you ask them what their hope is and they say, "Well, my hope is to go to heaven." You say, "What is heaven? Where is heaven? What does it mean to go to heaven?" And they become inarticulate because they have no idea what it means to go to heaven. They have no idea that they're going to be living forever in a glorified body in a New Jerusalem on a New Earth. They have no idea of this because they do not know Bible prophecy and do not know the promises of the future.

Another stimulus is it inspires evangelism. Oh does it ever inspire evangelism! When a person really believes Jesus is coming back they get excited about trying to share the gospel with as many people as they can as quickly as they can.

Or another one, and that is, it motivates holiness. I've seen this over and over and over again. When a person gets serious about the return of Jesus, they get serious about cleaning up their lives. You don't have to get up and preach every Sunday against gambling or against drinking or against drug abuse, or against promiscuous sex. If you will preach about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fact that He's at the very gates of Heaven about to return any moment, people will put those things aside without any encouragement whatsoever. They'll begin to clean up their lives and live holy lives because they believe the Lord is coming any moment.

An eighth reason for studying Bible prophecy, it provides understanding of current events. There is no way you can really understand what's going on in the world today unless you know something about Bible prophecy. Let me give you three examples. Bible prophecy illuminates what's happening in our society, the decay of society. Jesus said society will become as evil as it was in the days of Noah. And then I will return. You go look at the days of Noah, two characteristics, immorality and violence. Exactly what is happening in the world today, men will call evil good and they will call good evil, Isaiah said that is what is happening. Even *TIME Magazine* recognizes the decay of society. And Bible prophecy puts it in perspective.

Another one is apostasy, growing apostasy in the church. We have church leaders who have written books denying the virgin birth, denying the resurrection, denying the second coming. Denying every fundamental concept of the Bible and yet profess to be Christians, gross apostasy in the church today. And Bible prophecy says this over and over it says in the end times, men will hold to a form of religion but they will deny its power, they will deny the blood of Jesus they will deny the power of the Holy Spirit.

Or how can you understand what's going on in the Middle East today unless you know something about Bible prophecy. How the Bible says at the end times God will regather the Jews from the four corners of the earth. He will put them back into the land of Israel.

He will reestablish their state. He will put them back into the city of Jerusalem and at that time, the Lord Jesus Christ will return. The Bible also makes it very clear that once the Jew is back in the land, that all the nations of the world will come against Israel, particularly the Arab nations. They will covet the land and they will try to get the land and it says the nations of the world will divide up the land of Israel, and it says those nations will suffer the wrath of God.

There's another reason to be interested in the study of Bible prophecy and that is that Bible prophecy reveals the season of the Lord's return. Now, nobody can know the date of the Lord's return. There are a lot of sincere people who think they can but you cannot know the date of the Lord's return. But you can know the season of the Lord's return. The Bible teaches over and over that we can know the season of the Lord's return. For example, in 1 Thessalonians 5 it says that Jesus is returning like a thief in the night but then it immediately says, "But not for you brethren. For you are sons of light. You are sons of day." What does that mean? It means that if you're a believer, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you. It means that there are things you can understand that the world cannot understand. Jesus is coming like a thief in the night for the world. Jesus is coming like a thief in the night for many professing Christians who know nothing about Bible prophecy. They're gonna be stunned at the return of Jesus. But He is not coming like a thief in the night for those who know Bible prophecy, because if you know Bible prophecy you know there are signs that we are to look for, and as you begin to see those signs, you can know that we are living in the season of the Lord's return.

One of my favorite stories is about a prophecy conference I participated in Orlando, Florida in 1990. There was a great man of God there by the name of Elbert Peak who was 80-something years old. That man had been preaching Bible prophecy for 60 years and he got up and he said, "I've been assigned the topic, the signs of the times." He said, "Let me tell you something folks." He said, "I've been preaching on the signs of the times for 60 years. When I started you had to scratch around like a chicken to find one." He said, "Today they're everywhere. You would have to be spiritually blind. It's like God has a neon light in the sky flashing on and on 'Jesus is coming soon!'" He said, "I'm no longer looking for signs. I am listening for a sound. I'm listening for the sound of a trumpet." Boy I was shouting "Hallelujah amen! Let's blow that thing and get outta here!"

As our featured singer Jack Hollingsworth often says, "When he toots, I'm gonna scoot." And I believe that's gonna happen.

Okay there's another example of this. And that is in Hebrews 10:25 where the writer of Hebrews says, "Do not forsaken the assembling together as is the habit of some, but encourage one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near." What day? What day is he talking about here? He is talking about the Day of Judgment. He says so in verse 27, he's saying there's something you can see, something you can perceive. You can say, "Hey you see that? You see that? You see that?" He's coming. We're in the season of the Lord's return. Even Jesus said we could know the season of the Lord's return. Matthew 24:33, "Even so, you too, when you see all these things," the signs he's talking about "recognize that he is near, that he is right at the door." Well I'll tell you my friends, the signs are here today. They are everywhere, everywhere you look, there are signs pointing to the soon return of Jesus." The Jews have been regathered from the four corners of the earth. The Jews are back in the land of Israel. The Jews are back in the city of Jerusalem. And the whole world is coming together against Jerusalem. Those are the great prophecies concerning the Jews.

There are other prophecies but those are the great ones. The regathering of the Jews, the reestablishment of the state, the reoccupation of the city of Jerusalem, and the whole world coming together against Israel over one issue, the control of Jerusalem. That's where we are today. They're back in the land, back in the city. The whole world is coming together against them. The United Nations is saying, "We want Jerusalem, we want to internationalize it." The Vatican is saying, "We want it, we want to internationalize it." The European Union is saying, "We want it divided between the Jews and the Arabs." The United States is saying divide it between." And the Jews are saying, "It's ours, God gave it to us. We're gonna keep it. We're drawing the line in the sand." And the last great war is going to be fought in the Middle East over the control of the city of Jerusalem.

We are on the threshold of the tribulation. That's the signs of the times, and when you begin to study Bible prophecy you will understand that and you will understand that Jesus is about to come.

So, my conclusion is, all of God's Word is profitable. All of it, including Bible prophecy. That includes God's prophetic word, so I want to encourage you to read it, to study it, and to be blessed by it, and then go out and share it with others. Share it with as many people as you can, as quickly as you can. With loved ones, with neighbors, with friends. Because the time is short, you and I are living on borrowed time.

Well folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it was a blessing to you and I hope you will be back with us next week when we will continue this series on the Fundamentals of Bible prophecy by taking a look at the fascinating variety of prophecy. We'll take a look at written prophecy, oral prophecy, and symbolic prophecy. We'll also take a look at those prophets who were asked to act out their prophesies and we will try to guess which one will receive the best acting Oscar when rewards are handed out at the judgment seat of Jesus. Until next week, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program