

Christ in Prophecy
Prophecy 7: “The Variety of Bible Prophecy”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Have you ever thought about the diversity of Bible prophecy? To begin with, God used a very diverse group of people to serve as His prophets, young and old, rich and poor, sophisticated and uneducated. He then communicated with these people in diverse ways, through dreams, visions, angels, and words of knowledge. And the prophets themselves proclaim their messages in diverse ways, we have written prophecy, oral prophecy, acted prophecy, and symbolic prophecy.

Program

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. This is the third 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 has been abused. In our second program we examined the importance of Bible prophecy and we concluded that there are many reasons why every Christian should be interested in studying God’s prophetic Word. This week we are going to focus on the amazing and fascinating variety of prophecy. We’ll be taking a look at the variety of people who served as prophets, the variety of ways in which God spoke to them, and the variety of techniques they used to proclaim their messages to the public.

Our topic is the variety of Bible prophecy and I’d like to begin with a quote from Hebrews chapter 1:1 where the writer says that God spoke through the prophets in many portions and in many ways. I was reading that one time and it really perked my curiosity and I wondered, “What in the world is he talking about there?” So I went back to the Old Testament Scriptures and I started looking through them and I was literally amazed at what I found. Of course what I thought of first were the writing prophets, I thought of them first because these are the most famous prophets. The people who have books that are named after them which they wrote themselves, there are many of these of course, people like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. The so called Minor Prophets, I

don't like that term because they're not minor, like Hosea, Joel, and Amos. But they're all over the place there, the writing prophets.

But something else I noticed, and that is that among the writing prophecies there is a great diversity of people. There are the uneducated farmers like Amos, as opposed to the sophisticated poets like Isaiah. There are reluctant spokesmen like Jonah, as opposed to men of courage like Daniel. There are elderly spokesmen like Haggai and there are youthful ones like Zechariah who probably was only a teenager. There are obscure people that we know absolutely nothing about like Joel and very, very famous people like King David. It illustrates the meaning of a statement that is found in Second Chronicles 16:9, "The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." The Lord is not looking for rich people, He's not looking for brilliant people, He's not looking for cunning or clever people, He's looking for people who have completely given their heart to him. And any person in life regardless of their status can be used by the Lord if they are willing to be subject to him.

Now in addition to diversity of people, I also found a great diversity of styles among these prophets. For example, there is the pro style that is used by Ezekiel, Daniel, and most of the New Testament prophets, but also there is poetry. Supreme poetry that is used by David, and by Isaiah and Joel and Micah. There are preachers like Jeremiah Amos and Zechariah and John the Baptist who do nothing but just preach sermons and the entire books are sermons put end to end to end. And then there are dramas like the one by Habakkuk where Habakkuk speaks and God speaks and Habakkuk speaks. And there are autobiographies like Jonah and the book of Hosea. A great diversity of styles as well as diversity of people.

Finally, there was even variety in the nature of the revelation received by these people. The most common form of revelation was, "thus sayeth the Lord." In other words, the Lord spoke to them directly and they gave it to us. But there are other forms of revelation that are revealed such as dreams and visions and some simply recorded their experiences like Jonah wrote about his life and Hosea about his, and there was a prophecy in their lives.

So we have the writing prophets, but we've only touched the hem of the garment, when Hebrews 1 spoke about many different ways He really meant it. We have the writing prophets, we have the oral and the speaking prophets. Now these are very interesting, these are some of the most important prophets and yet they are also some of the most obscure prophets. Some of them are well known people like Elijah, Elisha, and Samuel. They didn't write books, people wrote books about them, they wrote down what they said. They were simply oral prophets that other people wrote down. But a lot of these prophets people just never really even heard of, they're not very well known. For example, one that comes to mind is the fellow named Nathan. You remember Nathan was the prophet who confronted David with his adultery. Well this was a prophet that most of us are aware of, but he is rather obscure.

Then there's Micaiah, ever hear of Micaiah? Micaiah is one of the few people in the whole Bible who was given a vision of Heaven. Several people were given a vision of Heaven, Isaiah was given a vision of Heaven, and others. But Micaiah is one of those very obscure prophets who was given a vision of God's throne room. He was also kind of a funny prophet because there was gonna be a war fought and Ahab and Jehoshaphat were gonna be allies in the war, and that was a good king with a bad king. And so Jehoshaphat said, "You know we never go to war without the prophets. The prophets have gotta come and tell us." So Ahab called in all of his prophets and every one of the prophets said, "You're gonna win, you're gonna win, you're gonna win, you're gonna win." And finally Jehoshaphat turned to him and said, "Do you have a prophet that tells the truth?" he said, "I've got one but I hate him, I just cannot stand him." "What's his name?" "Micaiah." "Call him in!" Micaiah came in and said, "You go out and you're both gonna be defeated." He said, "See I told you, he never says anything nice!" Well this was Micaiah, the man who was given a vision of the throne room of God.

Then there was Ahijah who condemned King Jeroboam, there was Hananiah who was a false prophet who condemned Jeremiah, and there were many nameless oral prophets. They were called the old prophet, the young prophet, the aggressive prophet, the man of God. Just no names whatsoever, and yet they're all over the pages of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament there are very few oral prophets. In the New Testament there are the four daughters of Philip who were prophets, and there was a guy named Agabus. You remember Agabus? He confronted Paul when Paul came back from one of his missionary journeys at Caesarea Maritime. And he said, "Paul, I got a message for you." And he took a rope and he wrapped the rope all around himself, and he said, "If you go to Jerusalem you're gonna end up like this." And Paul said, "I'm going anyway." And so Paul went and he ended up in bondage to the Roman Empire, eventually being sent to Rome itself.

So we've got the writing prophets, we've got the oral prophets, and we also have my favorites, the acting prophets. Now, the acting prophets were both writing prophets and oral prophets but what would happen is this. God would speak to them and he would say, "Listen, nobody is paying attention to what you're writing, nobody is paying attention to what you're speaking. So what I want you to do is I want you to stop writing stop speaking and start acting!" God made us He knows us better than anybody He knows that He can get our attention best by just getting all the senses involved so He would call on the prophets to act. And I wanna tell you, some of the things He asked these prophets to do are absolutely beyond belief.

Let me give you an example, here is Isaiah. God spoke to Isaiah one day and he said, "Isaiah nobody's paying attention to you, let's get their attention." I want you to go barefoot and naked for three years. And he did. For three years Isaiah went barefoot and naked, he was the original streaker! You know, people would be standing on the street corner talking and all of a sudden he went by, I mean he got their attention. When they say, "Man what are you doing? Have you lost your mind? Why are you running around like this?" He said, "It's a message from God. And the message is this: if you do not repent, God is gonna send an army, He's gonna take you into captivity and it's gonna happen so rapidly you will be taken into captivity naked. You won't even have time to put your clothes on."

Another time God spoke to a prophet by the name of Jeremiah. In fact this is an illustration of one of the ways in which he asked him to act things out. He asked these prophets to act many things out. I'm just giving you one example from each of their lives. He told Jeremiah right near the time that the nation of Judah was gonna fall, he said,

“Jeremiah nobody is paying attention let’s start acting.” He said, “You put on an ox yoke and you walk around Jerusalem all day long with this heavy ox yoke on your neck. And when people come to you and they say what is this all about you say it is God’s will that you go into captivity, you are to surrender to the Babylonian army. You are not to resist them and you are to go into captivity it’s God’s punishment for your rebellion.” Well you can imagine their reaction to that. They considered him to be a traitor, they threw him into a pit, and they almost killed him. But he was right. It was God’s will for them to go into captivity and it was a prophet acting out a prophecy from God.

Ezekiel, oh man, did he do a lot of acting. This was perhaps one of the most active actors of all. I don’t know if you ever noticed this, if you go back and start reading the book of Ezekiel, and you’ll notice something very interesting. When God called Ezekiel to be a prophet he struck him dumb and Ezekiel could not speak for several years until the city of Jerusalem fell and when it fell he was able to speak. So he had to act out his prophecies. And when people would ask him what he’s doing he would write it down. He wrote a lot of his prophecies down but he acted them out first. The very first prophecy he was asked to act out God said, “I want you to act like a little child. I want you to go over and get in a sand pile. Sit in a sand pile. Take a brick put it in the middle of the sand pile. Take the sand and make a little sand wall all around the sand pile. Take some twigs, put the twigs around that little sand wall, and when people come and say, ‘What’s going on?’ You say, ‘The brick is Jerusalem, these are the walls of Jerusalem, these are siege machines. These twigs are. And if you don’t repent God’s gonna send an army and they’re gonna put this city under siege and this city is gonna fall and be destroyed.’” They laughed and that’s exactly what happened. But it took a long time. God kept having him act out prophecy after prophecy.

For example, one time He said, “I want you to get a whole lot of dried animal dung and I want you to take it into the city of Jerusalem, pile it all up, light it, and cook your evening meal over it.” Well that was an anathema to a Jew. I mean polluted food! And when people came and asked what was wrong. He wrote it down he said, “This is a prophecy from God. If you do not repent, you are going to be taken into captivity and you will be forced to eat polluted food.”

On another occasion, I get tickled at this, it's good drawing of him here. He must have had a lot of hair, he wasn't like me. God said to him, "I want you to cut off all your hair and I want you to go down to the city of Jerusalem right in the middle, get all the people there and here's what I want you to do." He said "I want you to take one third of your hair and burn it. Then I want you take one third of your hair and I want you to throw it up in the air and while it's in the air take a sword and chop at it. And then I want you to get up on the wall and take the other third of your hair and throw it up in the wind and let it blow over the wall." I would imagine that they called Happy Dale Funny Farm that day and said, "You know, this guy Ezekiel has lost it. He has simply lost it, come get him." But he did it and when people said, "What does this mean?" He says, "If you don't repent one third of you will burn to death in the city, one third of you will be killed by the sword, and one third of you will be taken back into captivity. You better repent."

In fact, God asked this man to do something absolutely incredible. He told him one day he said, "Ezekiel, tomorrow morning when you wake up, your wife will be dead, and when you get up, I don't want you to pay any attention to her, I do not want you to prepare her body, I do not want you to mourn over her. I want you to go on out and I want you to do what you do every day, and when people come to you and say, 'Why are you neglecting your dead wife's body? Why are you doing this?' You say to them, 'Because if you do not repent, this city is going to be taken so suddenly and so overwhelming that you the living will be taken into captivity and will not even be allowed to bury your dead.'" This man is going to be a leading contender for the best acting Oscar when God hands out awards at the Great Throne Judgment.

Well, he's not gonna win it. I don't think he's gonna win it. I think the guy who's going to win best acting Oscar is going to be a prophet that is not so well known, and that is this man, the prophet Hosea. I think hands down he will win the Oscar for best actor because it's incredible what God asked him to do. His entire end of life was a prophecy acted out.

This man lived in the northern nation of Israel. You remember after Solomon died the nation broke into two parts, the northern nation, ten tribes, the southern nation, two tribes. And that northern nation was apostate from the beginning. It lasted almost 200 years and during that 200 years it did not have one single king who was considered righteous in the eyes of God. At the time that Hosea was raised up as a prophet it was

right at the end of that 200 years when this nation was about to be conquered by the Assyrians and God called him and asked him to do something that was absolutely incomprehensible. This man was one of the few righteous men living in the whole nation and God spoke to him one day and he said, "I'm gonna ask you to do something that you will find repulsive but if you love me you will do it. Now here's what I want you to do. I want you to go out and I want you to find a common prostitute and I want you to take her off the street and I want you to marry her and I want you to give her your good name. I want you to redeem her from harlotry." I'm sure he must have said, "Now Lord could we have a repeat of the instructions?" You know, I mean can you imagine this? "I'm a righteous man Lord!" "I want you to do it."

One wag has said that the woman he selected must have been incredibly beautiful. He certainly did not select her for her name, her name was Gomer. But he went out and he found this prostitute by the name of Gomer. He married her and gave her his prestige, his name, and then God said, "Go preach it!" What was he to preach? Well what was the message of this land that was completely engulfed in idolatry? The message was this: Israel is a spiritual prostitute when God selected them as his chosen people. They were a spiritual prostitute when God selected them.

You see the people of Israel were full of pride. Every time God sent a prophet and said, "Repent or God will destroy you." They said, "Hey! Who do you think you're talking to! We're God's chosen people. God will never touch us! He'll never touch our city! Never touch our temple. We're God's special people." They were full of pride. They thought God had selected them because they were more beautiful than anybody else or more intelligent or because they were more cunning. They thought they deserved it, and the message of Hosea was God selected you through his sovereign grace, he could have selected anybody and when he selected you, you were a spiritual prostitute. Your father Abraham worshipped idols at the time he was selected at the time he was called. You've got to understand you were not selected because you deserve it. You were selected out of God's sovereign grace. Repent.

It was not a happy message. He was stoned, people tried to kill him. He came home completely exhausted, dejected, and when he got home he could not believe what had happened while he was gone. While he was gone he discovered that his wife had given

in to her old passion. She had gone back on the street, she was a harlot once again she was offering herself to the highest bidder. It was unbelievable he just could not believe it! He cried out to God, he said, "God! You know you give me this impossible, first you embarrass me by having me marry this woman, then you give me this impossible message, and now I come home and she's back out on the street! My heart is broken God, you don't understand how I feel." And God spoke to him a second time and said, "I know exactly how you feel because my wife did the same thing to me. My wife Israel has been unfaithful to me. My wife Israel is a common prostitute and I want you to go out now and I want to preach the second message." And what was the second message? Like Gomer, Israel has been unfaithful to her husband, chasing after foreign gods, like Hosea God's heart is broken. He went out and he preached the brokenness of God's heart, how God's heart was broken and how God still loved them and wanted them to come back even though they were totally unfaithful, even though they were nothing but a brazen prostitute, God loved them.

And so he preached that message and when he came back home, God spoke to him a third time, He told him something that he could hardly believe. He said Hosea, "I'm gonna ask if you do something more difficult than I asked you to do the first time, I want you to forgive your wife and buy her out of harlotry." Can you imagine that? Forgive your wife? What's going on here? I'm sure he must have said, "Lord, I mean..." Just think of it for a moment, think of what must have happened as his wife got up in the city square and began to take her clothes off. Offering herself to the highest bidder and this man, everybody knowing this was his former wife, standing there and begins to bid on her and people can't believe it and they begin to bid, and they bid higher, and he bids, and they bid and they bid. And they're playing with him and taunting him and he keeps bidding and bidding until finally he's bid everything he has and he buys her out of harlotry and brings her home. That's where the story ends. We're not told anything other than that. But we don't have to be told anything. I can tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt that woman was faithful to him to the very day he died because she could fathom the forgiveness that she had experienced. She had not repented, she did not deserve anything but death, but instead what did he do? He bought her out of harlotry, paid everything he had.

What he did was he illustrated the meaning of grace, the meaning of grace. You see, through an Old Testament prophet and a prostitute, God illustrated what grace was all

about. He illustrated what the cross was going to be all about when God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. The only thing any of us deserve is death. But God paid the price to make it possible for us to be redeemed. I think Hosea's gonna win the Oscar.

Well, let's review. There's written prophecy, there's oral prophecy, there's acted prophecy, there's one last type of prophecy and that is symbolic prophecy and I love this. Symbolic prophecy is wonderful because when you understand it and you really get on top of it, it will bring the Old Testament alive for you. Many Christians do not like to read the Old Testament, they just find it very difficult and like an enigmatic puzzle, but if you start looking for Jesus on every page of the Old Testament it will become extremely interesting to you and you can find Him on almost every page of the Old Testament in what we call symbolic prophecy. Now there are three types of symbolic prophecy. You can find individual lives in the Old Testament that are symbolic prophetically of the Messiah. You can find historical events in the Old Testament that are symbolic prophetically of the Messiah. And you find inanimate objects like the Tabernacle itself everything in that Tabernacle pointed to the Messiah. And all of these are symbolic prophecy. Let's look quickly for a moment at a few of these.

First individualized, I could go on for a couple of hours over how almost every major character in the Old Testament is a type of Christ, let's take one, Joseph. Joseph was given a special message for his people. Jesus was given the same thing. Joseph was rejected by his brethren. Jesus was rejected by the Jews. Joseph was symbolically killed, he was taken by his brethren and thrown into a pit. Jesus was literally killed. Joseph was symbolically resurrected by a caravan that came along and pulled him out of the pit as Jesus was literally resurrected. Joseph then went into a far country, as Jesus has gone into a far country today. Joseph took a Gentile bride in that far country. Jesus is taking a Gentile bride today. When Joseph had taken his Gentile bride, what'd he do? He revealed himself to his brethren and they accepted him. What is gonna happen when Jesus completes His Gentile bride? When the last Gentile is brought in, Jesus will appear in the heavens and the Jewish remnant will look upon Him whom they have pierced they will weep and wail and mourn as one weeps over the loss of an only child and they will accept Him as Yeshua Hamashia, as the Messiah of Israel.

Or take the historical events like the feasts themselves. There were seven feasts over a period of months, those feasts all pointed to historical events in the past, they all pointed to the agricultural cycle in the present. But what the Jews didn't realize they were all prophecies concerning the future. Jesus was the Passover lamb, crucified on Passover. He was our unleavened bread, He was the sinless one, He was the first fruits of the resurrected, actually resurrected on the Day of First Fruits. 50 days later on the day of Pentecost, the feast of harvest, the Church was established. There are three last feasts that have not been fulfilled. We are in that long period there between the Feast of Harvest and the Feast of Trumpets which is the Church Age, and those last three feasts will probably be fulfilled in Church history just as the first ones will. Perhaps the Rapture will occur on the Day of Trumpets. Perhaps the Day of Atonement will be the day of the salvation of the Jewish remnant, and certainly, tabernacles will be the celebration of the Lord returning to tabernacle among us in the Millennial reign in Jerusalem.

Then there are the inanimate objects. I wish I had time to go into great detail on this but let me just mention one inanimate object and that's the one you see here. The Ark of the Covenant a very accurate, artistic, rendering of the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant, everything about it was a symbolic prophecy about the Messiah. It was made of wood, which was a prophecy that the Messiah would be human. It was overlaid with gold which was a prophecy that the Messiah would be divine. Inside it were three objects, one was the pot of manna which was a symbolic prophecy that the Messiah would be the bread of life. In addition to that there were the tablets of stone that Moses received on the mountain and this was a symbolic prophecy that the Messiah would perfectly fulfill the law. And in addition to that was the rod of Aaron that budded, the dead rod that budded. Which was a symbolic prophecy that the Messiah would die and come back to life. On top was what was called the Mercy Seat. The Mercy Seat and once a year the High Priest would go in, it was called the lid of the box was called the Mercy Seat. He would go in once a year and he would sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat and this was a symbolic prophecy that one day the Messiah would come and through the spilled blood of the Messiah, the grace of God would be able to cover the law of God which was inside of that box. On top of that box were two Cherubim, two golden Cherubim and they were carved out of gold, they were one at each end. And it said that their wings hovered over the box and their wing tips touched and it's said that the Shekinah glory of God resided above those wing tips. Now that's the description that

we're given in the Old Testament of the Ark of the Covenant. Every aspect of that is pointing to some aspect of the Messiah. That He would be divine that He would be the Bread of the Life that He would perfectly fulfill the law, that He would be resurrected from the dead and that His blood would make it possible for the grace of God to cover the law of God.

Now I want to show you something very interesting. Let's go to New Testament for a moment and let's look at a passage in John chapter 20 beginning with verse 11. This is a simple historical statement, it's all it appears to be. "Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping and as she wept she stooped and looked into the tomb and she beheld two angels in white, sitting, one at the head one at the feet where the body of Jesus had been lying." What does she do? She walks up to the tomb. She sticks her head inside the door she looks over into the chamber where you can see one slab. She sees where the body of Jesus had been lying, and what did she see there? She saw an angel at the head and at the foot. What did she really see? You do not understand what she really saw unless you understand Old Testament prophecy and how symbolic it is. What she saw was the fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant. She saw the Mercy Seat where the blood had been spilled. She saw those Cherubim at each end, the Angels of God just as on the Ark sitting at each end of that sacred place where the blood of the Messiah had been spilled. She saw the fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant. But you would never know that if you did not know symbolic prophecy from the Old Testament. It brings a simple historical statement alive and gives it a depth that otherwise you would not have. That's why it's so important to understand Bible prophecy and to understand all the various aspects of it including symbolic prophecy.

Well, I want to conclude where we began with Hebrews chapter 1:1. "God after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions, and in many, many ways, yes. He did. And I would say to you, accept the prophetic Word. I would say to you study the prophetic Word. I would say to you appreciate the prophetic Word. I would say to you believe the prophetic Word. And I would say to you, praise God for the glimpses that He has given of the future and for the promises He has made. He is a God of promises. He keeps every promise. And one day soon the Jewish remnant is going to look upon Him whom they have pierced and they are going to cry out "Baruch Ha Ba B'shem Adonai." Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! But before that, you

and I, the church, are going to see Jesus revealed in the heavens, we're gonna hear the trumpet blast, and we're gonna go up to meet Him in the sky, and I can hardly wait, I'm crying "Maranatha, Maranatha, come quickly Lord Jesus!"

Well folks that's our program for this week I hope it was a blessing to you and I hope you'll be back with us next week when we will continue this series on the fundamentals of Bible prophecy by taking a look at the interpretation of prophecy. We will deal with the crucial question of what is the best way to interpret Bible prophecy. Specifically we will consider whether or not prophecy should be spiritualized and interpreted symbolically or whether it should be interpreted literally for its plain sense meaning. 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