

Christ in Prophecy

Prophecy 34: The Importance of Bible Prophecy

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Bible prophecy is one of the most ignored topics in churches today. Pastors avoid it like a plague. They usually assert that it is either too controversial or too difficult to understand. And they often claim it is too other-worldly, meaning it has no relevance to Christian living here and now. The result is that one-fourth to one-third of God's Word has been put on the shelf, and the average Christian ends up living with no anticipation or even yearning for the Lords' soon return. For a presentation about the vital importance of Bible prophecy, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Thanks for tuning in to our program. I hope it will prove to be a blessing to you. As I said at the opening, I want to talk with you about the vital importance of Bible prophecy.

There are two areas of God's Word that have been terribly ignored and abused in the history of the Church. They are the opening of the Bible and the conclusion of the Bible; the books of Genesis and Revelation. People have tended to spiritualize the opening of the Bible by claiming that the 6 days of Creation were really 6 million or 60 million or 600 million years. And, folks, when you start out spiritualizing the Bible by claiming that it doesn't really mean what it says, there is a tendency to do the same thing with the ending of the Bible arguing that the book of Revelation really doesn't mean what it says.

But the abuses of Bible prophecy applies to more than just the book of Revelation it applies to all of God's Prophetic Word. And that folks, is a shame, because the study of Bible prophecy is very important for many reasons. In just a moment I'm going to share with you some comments I made about the importance of Bible prophecy. They were made at a Bible conference sponsored by Jan Markell's Olive Tree Ministries in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the process of that presentation I presented nine reasons why all Christians should be interested in studying God's Prophetic Word.

Dr. Reagan's Presentation

Dr. Reagan: I want to give you some reasons why every Christian should be interested in studying Bible prophecy and number one is this: the quantity. Bill, mentioned this, the quantity, one-fourth to one-third of the Bible is prophetic in nature. That comes as a great shock to many people but it's true. Think of it in the Old Testament you have the major prophecy books like Isaiah, and Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and all the Minor Prophets. Plus you have the Psalms, nearly all the Psalms are prophetic in nature that is a lot of literature, a lot of literature. Then you get into the New Testament and you have entire books like 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the book of Revelation, huge passages like Matthew 24 and Luke 21; one-fourth to one-third of the Bible is prophetic in nature. And what are we told in 2 Timothy 3, all Scripture, all Scripture, all Scripture, that includes prophecy is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate equipped for

every good work. Don't take one-fourth to one-third of God's Word and put it on the shelf, dig into it and study it, it will bless you.

Alright let's take a look at another one here. Another reason to study Bible prophecy is its uniqueness. I don't know if you've ever thought about this or not but fulfilled prophecy is a unique characteristic of the Bible. There is no other book in the world that contains fulfilled prophecies. Did you know for example there's not one fulfilled prophecy in any of the sayings of Confucius or Buddha? There is not one fulfilled prophecy in the Koran, not one. There is not one fulfilled prophecy in the Hindu Vedras. There is not one fulfilled prophecy in the book of Mormon, not one. Only the Bible contains fulfilled prophecy and it contains hundreds, and hundreds and hundreds of prophecies that have already been fulfilled in history. Look at Isaiah 41, "Can your idols make such claims as these? Let them come and show what they can do says, God the King of Israel, 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." He's mocking the idols. He's saying you worship a totem pole. Have your totem pole tell me what is going to happen in the future. I was in India and noticed people worshipping large boulders and even worshipping rats. Have the rat tell me what is going to happen in the future. Have the boulder tell me what is going to happen in the future. The God I worship, the true God of this Universe, Yahweh He knows the future. He proclaims the future and He sees to it that it comes to pass. Test the idols in that way.

Here's another reason we should study Bible prophecy: it validates Scripture. Prophecy attests to the supernatural origin of the Bible. The seminaries say no, it is simply man's search for God. It is not. It is God's revelation to man. And Bible prophecy proves that beyond a shadow of a doubt. For example take Isaiah 13, in Isaiah 13 he prophesied that Babylon will fall to the Medes and the Persians. Folks, when he wrote that prophecy Babylon wasn't even a world empire. When he wrote that prophecy the world empire were the Assyrians. And yet he said, one day Babylon will be the world empire and it will fall to the Medes and the Persians. That has to be supernatural knowledge. Or consider Micah 3 and verse 12 where Micah prophesied that Jerusalem would become a heap of ruins and that the Temple Mount would be plowed. That was written 100 years before Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple Mount was plowed by the Babylonians. Or consider Jeremiah 29:10, Jeremiah said, "Yes, you are going into captivity to Babylon and you will stay there for 70 years." And that is the exact amount of time they stayed there. In fact in the 69th year of their captivity Daniel discovered Jeremiah's prophecy, calculated they had been there 69 years. Realized they had never repented. Got on his knees and prayed one of the greatest prayers of repentance in all the Bible; Daniel chapter 9 and asked God to forgive the nation that the prophecy might be fulfilled and they would be released from captivity in the 70th year. Not only that but consider this in Isaiah 44 and 45 where Isaiah says that at the end of the Babylonian captivity, this is written now 150 years before. At the end of the Babylonian captivity the Jews will be released from captivity by a king named Cyrus. A 100 years, 150 years before Cyrus was even born he prophesied that they would be released by this man and even gave his name.

Or of course many of you are familiar with this consider the prophecies of Daniel in Daniel chapter 2 where Daniel was given a vision, interpreted the vision of Nebuchadnezzar and said, "Sir, you are the golden head, the Babylonian Empire and you will be overthrown by the chest of silver, which will be the Medo-Persian Empire. And it will be overthrown by the thighs of bronze which will be the Greek Empire. And it will be overthrown by the empire represented by the two iron legs which we know was the Roman Empire. You know Daniel wrote history in advance better than most people have written it after the fact. And it was all by supernatural knowledge of God. Or consider Jesus; Jesus was a great prophet. When He left the Galilee for the last time

to go to Jerusalem He put a curse upon three cities. He put a curse upon Capernaum, and Bethsaida, and Chorazin and He said, "If I had preached in Sodom and Gomorrah what I preached here, Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented. You didn't repent, curse be upon you." About 150 years later there was a great earthquake, those three cities were totally destroyed. Tiberius was not but those three were. They were so totally destroyed that by 1800 critics of the Bible were writing books in which they were saying we can prove beyond a shadow of a doubt the Bible is full of myth, legend, and superstition because it said Jesus spent His ministry in those three towns and they never existed. Today you can go visit all three because since 1850 all three have been discovered by the archaeologists. Jesus was a prophet. In fact this picture of Him sitting on the Mount of Olives reminds me of the fact that in the last week of His life He looked out on that city and said, "You see this city, you see that Temple not one stone will be left upon another. The Temple will be destroyed." And it was 40 years later in 70 AD just as He prophesied. Was that a coincidence? I don't think so.

Alright, let's consider another reason for studying Bible prophecy and that is it validates Jesus as who He said He was; that He was God in the flesh. Bible prophecy I think is the greatest evidence of that. Look for example at Micah 5:2 this is probably one of the best known prophecies about the First Coming of the Messiah. It says in Micah 5:2 that the Messiah will be born in the town of Bethlehem. This was written 500 years before Jesus was born. But you know it says more than that. I don't know if you ever noticed this, it says more than that. It says He will be born in Bethlehem Ephrata. You ever wonder about that? Bethlehem Ephrata. Do you know why He said that? Because when He wrote that prophecy there were two Bethlehems in Israel. There were two. There was one up near the Sea of Galilee, and there was one down south of Jerusalem. And He wanted to nail it. It's like if today I ask you where you were born and you said, "I'm born in Springfield." I'd have to ask you another question because there is a Springfield, Missouri, and a Springfield, Illinois, and a Springfield in almost every nation in the union. Well, there were two Bethlehems. The prophet nailed it precisely. These are not general, vague prophecies like the ones that Nostradamus wrote that you could take and interpret in any way you want to interpret them. These are precise prophecies, "He will be born in Bethlehem Ephrata."

Or consider this one in Psalm 22 one of the most amazing prophecies of all about Jesus the whole Psalm is about the crucifixion. And in Psalm 22 verse 16 it says the Messiah will die by having His hands and His feet pierced. Folks that was written 1,000 years before Jesus. Written by King David, 1,000 years before Jesus. It was written at a time when the only way of execution by the Jews was by stoning. A 1,000 years later the only way the Jews executed, stoning. But, they couldn't stone because the power of execution had been taken away by the Romans. And the Romans had developed a system called crucifixion in which the hands and the feet were pierced. This has to be supernatural knowledge for a person to prophecy that 1,000 years before Jesus is born, 700 years before the Romans developed crucifixion as a sophisticated way of killing people.

Or, Zechariah, the little book of Zechariah it's amazing the prophecies that are in that little book. People always say, "Oh that is an apocalyptic book doesn't mean what it says." Well how about the First Coming prophecies? It says the Messiah will come on a donkey. He will be hailed as a king. He will be betrayed. He will be betrayed by a friend. He will be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. The 30 pieces of silver will be used to buy a potter's field. It says He will be lifted up. It said He will be pierced. All of those prophecies in that one little book and every one of them literally fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Well, one time I did an intensive study of all the Messianic prophecies in the Bible and I came to the conclusion that there are approximately 330 prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the First Coming of the Messiah, but many of

those are repetitive. For example many times it says the Messiah will be of the lineage of David or the tribe of Judah. So if you go through and you take out all the repetitive prophecies I came up, and I have these listed in a book out there called, "The Christ in Prophecy Study Guide," 109 separate and distinct prophecies. 109 that Jesus fulfilled. That's a lot of prophecies for one person to fulfill.

Now, the odds of just seven of those being fulfilled accidentally in someone's life are 1 in 10 to the 17th power. That is a one with 17 zeros after it or 1 in one-hundred quadrillion. That's not my calculations those are the calculations of an astrophysicist who taught at a college in California back in the 40's and 50's by the name of Peter Stoner. I never met Peter Stone I wish I could have he's gone to be with the Lord now. But he wrote a book that was published by Moody Press and in this book he calculated these odds. You can go to the book, you can find all the calculations there, and this was just 7 of the prophecies, not 109 he just took 7 of the most famous prophecies concerning the Messiah and he calculated the odds at 1 in 10 to the 17th power. That is beyond the realm of accidental. It just can't be. And again I never met Peter Stoner but I know he was a good guy and the reason I know he's was a good guy is because in his book, "Science Speaks," he uses Texas to illustrate this point, and I love that. So, here is his illustration using the great state of Texas. He said, "I want to give you an idea of what 1 in 10 to the 17th is. He said lets fill the state of Texas knee deep in silver dollars. Then fly over the state and flip out one silver dollar that has a black check mark on it. Then turn lose 10,000 bulldozers and let them just bulldoze around the state for about 10 years and get those silver dollars really mixed up. And then take a guy and blindfold him. The odds that on the first draw he will reach down and pick up the silver dollar with the black check mark is 1 in 10 to the 17th power." We are not talking about coincidence here folks. We are not talking about accidental things. We are talking about prophecy fulfilled supernaturally in the life of Jesus Christ.

Another reason to study Bible prophecy is it is a great tool of evangelism. Most people don't realize this, it is a tremendous tool of evangelism. It can be used as an effective tool to win people to Jesus. And the very first Gospel sermon ever preached is proof positive of it. Go home read Acts 2 that short sermon there that Peter preaches. All he did in that sermon was say, "The prophets said the Messiah would do this; Jesus fulfilled it. The prophet said the Messiah would do this; Jesus fulfilled it. The prophet said the Messiah would do this; Jesus fulfilled it. That is all it is one prophecy after another. And suddenly the people just interrupted him and said, "What must we do to be saved?" They were convicted by the teaching of Bible prophecy and him showing them that Jesus had fulfilled it.

Or consider Philip and the eunuch. Philip is given a horizontal rapture, he is taken over to a road. He sees this Ethiopian eunuch coming down the road and he reading a big scroll and he stops and they start talking. He says, "What is this scroll?" And he quotes it and what is it? Isaiah 53. He says, "Do you understand it?" He said, "I don't understand it." He said, "Let me explain it." He explains how Yeshua, Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. The man is baptized, goes on his way rejoicing the first African convert, probably the guy who founded the Coptic Church. All with Bible prophecy. Second Timothy 3:15, "From childhood you Timothy, have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Folks that was written before the New Testament existed. When he says from childhood you've known the sacred writings, he's not talking about Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He's not talking about anything in the New Testament. He's saying Timothy from the time you were a child you have been taught the Torah, you have been taught what we call the Old Testament and from that alone you received enough wisdom to lead you to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. And I would submit to you that is primarily through the study of Bible prophecy.

Another reason to study Bible prophecy, it is a great tool of moral teaching. The prophetic Word is a great repository of moral teaching. Most people don't realize that if you go through the prophets you will find three or four times as much stuff forth telling the present rather than foretelling the future. They spent most of their time reading the riot act to people. They spent most of their time talking about religious hypocrisy and things of that nature. Let me give you an example here is a quote from Amos. I love Amos I call him the Harry Truman of the Old Testament because he spits words like bullets. And look at what he says here. He is speaking for God and he says to them, "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. And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from me the noise of your song. 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." God is interested in justice. He is interested in righteousness. The Word is full of passages about His concern for widows and orphans, and for people using unjust scales. He is concerned about social justice. Yes, He is. He is more concerned about the salvation of our souls, but He is also concerned about social justice. And what he is saying here is not that these things are unimportant, they are important. But they are unimportant if you go through all this religious rigmarole and then you go home and cheat on your wife. And cheat on your business partner. And cheat on your taxes. What good is all the religious rigmarole? It's all a bunch of hypocrisy.

Let me show you how this will preach. Here is Dave Reagan's paraphrase version, "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 and 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." The prophets are powerful in talking about morality. Morality.

Well here is another reason to study Bible prophecy it is a great stimulus for spiritual growth. I've already alluded to that. It provides hope. The average Christian has very little hope in terms of trying to define. You ask the average Christian, "What is your hope?" And they'll say, "My hope is to go to Heaven." You say, "Ok, what is Heaven?" And suddenly they become very inarticulate. Are you going to have a body? Going to have a name? Going to be recognizable? Are you going to eat? You going to work? You going to create things? Where are you going to be? Are you going to be on a cloud playing a harp? You going to be--is it going to be on the ground? Are you going to be on the New Jerusalem in the ground, or New Jerusalem out in space? Did you know the Bible answers every question I just asked? Every one of them. But we just haven't studied. We don't know. I've learned this; I've learned the more you know about Bible prophecy the greater your hope will be. The greater your hope will be. Promise after promise, after promise, after promise is made to us as overcomers and we need to know those promises and live in the hope and expectation of those promises. Another reason it inspires evangelism as I said and it also motivate holiness. Almost every passage in the New Testament that talks about prophecy says for example in 1 John it says focus your life upon the return of Jesus Christ. Think about the return of Jesus Christ because as you think about the return of Jesus Christ you will purify yourselves. It inspires evangelism and holiness. It is very practical.

An eighth reason to study prophecy and that it provides understanding of current events. There is no way you can understand and appreciate the decay of society today unless you know what the Bible says about that. Unless you know that Jesus said, prophesied point blank the world is going to go in a circle. When I come back it is going to be just as evil, just as violent, just as immoral as it was in the days of Noah. And we are seeing that happening before our very eyes.

Look put that back on the screen fellas, I want you to look at this "Time Magazine" cover here. Even people who are secular, even people who do not have a spiritual bone about them recognize the deterioration of society. Here is a whole cover of "Time Magazine" devoted to dirty words in movies, and television, and radio, and the shock jocks and all that. "What is our nation coming to?" they say.

Or consider this apostasy in the church. Who would ever dream, dream just 20 years ago that we would live in an age where denominations were endorsing homosexuals as bishops of their churches, and even advocating marriage between homosexuals? That is how fast it has deteriorated. It's amazing. I know a bishop of a church of a major denomination who wrote a book about five years ago in which he denied the virgin birth, denied the miracles of Jesus, denied the Second Coming and argued that Paul and Timothy were homosexual lovers. Why does he even bother? Why does he even bother? More and more we are seeing people like even among people calling themselves evangelicals like the Emergent Church Movement who are just taking the Word of God and throwing it out saying, "Oh, well, you know there's not really any truth we just got to be touchy, feely about this. And we mustn't be judgmental. And we mustn't be intolerant and so forth, and so on." And truth is going out the window. It reminds me of W. A. Criswell the former pastor of First Baptist Church who once said, "You know the more I look around at the apostasy in the Church I've come to the conclusion that most people believe that the only part of the Bible that is inerrant and inspired is that part they agree with." You know I agree with, it's inspired. If I don't agree with its not inspired, got to throw that out, cut that out, get the scissors and chop on it. That's where we are today in the apostasy of the Church.

Or consider the Middle East. I think as Bill clearly illustrated to you there is no way, no way you could even begin to understand what is going on the Middle East today unless you know something about the history of Israel from the Word of God; the promises of God to Israel. The fact that Israel has an everlasting covenant there for that land that God has never taken away. The deed to that land belongs to them. And you can't understand all the conflict that is going on there today unless you get into Bible prophecy and suddenly your eyes will be open and you will be understanding things that you never understood before.

And finally we need to study Bible prophecy because it reveals the season of the Lord's return. Nobody can know the date, but we can know the season. Beyond a shadow of a doubt we can know the season. Look at this, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, "Now as to the signs and the seasons brethren you have no need of anything to be written to you for you yourselves know full well that the Day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night." That's where I used to stop reading. The church I was in we stopped there. And the preacher would say, "See, not anything you need to know about the coming of the Lord. He will come like a thief in the night, going to sneak up on you. Might as well not think about it. Nor worry about. Not be focused on it just go on and live your life. Then one day I kept reading, look what it says, "But you brethren, you believers, are not in darkness that the day should overtake you like a thief. For you are sons of light, and sons of day. We are not of night or darkness so then let us not sleep as others do but let us be alert and sober." Why are we sons of day? Because we have the Holy Spirit residing inside of us. And by leaning on the Holy Spirit we can understand things from the Word of God that others cannot understand. We can know the season of the Lord's return. He is coming like a thief in the night for the world. He is coming like a thief in the night for unbelievers. He is coming like a thief in the night even for those who are believers but don't know Bible prophecy. But for those who know Bible prophecy He is not coming like a thief in the night. I remember a few years ago I was in Orlando, Florida speaking and there was a great man of God there by the name of Albert Peak. He's gone to be with the Lord now. He is 80 years old, this was the early 90's, 80 years old and he got up and he said, "I've been asked to speak on the signs of the times that point to the soon return of Jesus." He said, "I've been preaching on this for 60 years."

And he said, "Sixty years ago when I began he had to scratch around like a chicken to find one sign." He said, "Today there are so many signs, there are so many that I'm no longer looking for signs. I'm listening for a sound. The sound of a trumpet." Boy that is where I am. I'm listening for the sound of that trumpet. Look at this Hebrew 10:25, "Do not forsake 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? Well it is the Day of Judgment it says in verse 27. It is saying that there is something we can see. Something that we can perceive with our senses. We can say, "You see that? You see that? You see that? Jesus is coming soon. See that? See that? See that? Jesus is coming soon." There is something that can be perceived; and of course those are the signs of the times. Or consider what Jesus said in Matthew 24:33, "Even so, you to when you see all these things." What? The signs He's been talking about, "recognize that He's near right at the door." When you see all these things taking place and all of them coming together you will know that I am right at the door ready to step out on a cloud and come back.

Conclusion, all of God's Word is profitable, all of it. And that includes God's prophetic Word. So read it. Study it. And be blessed by it. And then share it with other people. Thank you and God bless you.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy. I hope that presentation was a blessing to you. I want to take a moment to emphasize to you three facts that are taught in God's Prophetic Word.

First, Jesus is returning to this earth to reign for a thousand years in glory and majesty from Mount Zion in Jerusalem. And during that time, the earth is going to be flooded with peace, righteousness and justice, as the waters cover the seas. This is a promise that is made over and over in both the Old and New Testaments. And it is one that Jesus Himself made over and over. In fact, Jesus' last words on this earth were a promise to return. They were spoken to the Apostle John on the Island of Patmos when Jesus appeared to him 65 years after His resurrection. Jesus said to John, "I am coming quickly" meaning He is going to return suddenly. And John cried out, "Amen! Come Lord Jesus!"

The second prophetic fact that is made clear in God's Prophetic Word is that the return of Jesus is going to take place in two stages. First will be the Rapture of the Church, and then, some seven years later, the Second Coming. And the third prophetic fact is that the Rapture of the Church can occur any moment. There is not one prophecy that has to be fulfilled for the Rapture to occur.

And so, I have a vital question for you: "Are you ready for the Rapture, or will you be left behind to face the terror of the Antichrist and the wrath of God during the Great Tribulation?" If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you are ready. If not, then you need to repent of your sins and reach out in faith and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Do not delay! God in His mercy has extended your life to this moment to give you an opportunity to escape the wrath of God by accepting His grace that He has offered in the gift of His Son.

Well folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it's been a blessing to you. 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