

# *Unlocking The Mystery & Treasures Of My Inheritance*

## Lesson #1 Is The Study Of Prophecy

### A Playground For Fanatics Or Green Pastures For Disciples?

Why should I put much time and effort into studying Bible prophecy? Waste of time?

David Reagan: Rick Warren mocks Bible prophecy when he writes, "If you want Jesus to come back sooner, focus on fulfilling your mission, not figuring out prophecy." He then characterizes prophecy as a "distraction." Warren says that anyone who lets himself get involved in distractions like prophecy "is not fit for the kingdom of God."

Rev. 19:10 "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

If prophecy is properly taught, it should emphasize the centrality of Jesus.

Adrian Rogers: "All prophecy is a witness to the truth that Jesus is coming back — that people need to be ready for His return."

Opinion Of Some: It is a fruitless and pointless effort to seek to know anything about future events because God is in charge and will ultimately take care of things.

It is true God is sovereign, [Ps. 33:11] but the Lord commanded us to Watch For Him.

He wants us to be uniquely aware of the signs of the times in the last days.

That KNOWLEDGE can be used to enhance evangelism, spiritual growth and maturity and prevent people from being deceived about prophesied events during the last days.

Why Should I Study Prophetic Scriptures: Benefits

I. The Prominence of Prophecy in God's Word

a. Of the 216 chapters [7,959 verses] found in the New Testament, there are 330 references to the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ. IF you were to omit passages about prophecy, you would have to remove 1 of every 30 verses. You would skip 23 of the 27 New Testament books which mention prophecy.

b. There are 333 prophecies in the Bible about Jesus Christ.

109 were fulfilled in His 1<sup>st</sup> coming. 224 are LEFT to be fulfilled.

c. For every prophecy about the birth of Christ, there are 8 prophecies regarding His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

d. Less than 10 of the 46 OT prophets speak of Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> coming. 36 speak of His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

e. 1,527 OT passages refer to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

f. Next to faith, His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming is the most dominant subject in the New Testament.

g. Jesus said 21 times in the New Testament: I will return to earth!

Question: In light of prophecy's prominence, can I say: "Prophecy is just not relevant?"

II. Jesus' View

a. He rebuked people who didn't seem to recognize the significance of the events taking place around them.

b. He scolded those who could read the sky for weather, but were unable to read the "signs of the times."

Luke 12:56 You play-actors (hypocrites)! You know how [intelligently] to discern and interpret and prove the looks of the earth and sky; but how is it that you

DO NOT KNOW how to discern and interpret and apply the proof to this present time?

Consider: It was no small thing to Jesus that the people of His generation remained IGNORANT to God's prophetic Word. He wants us to investigate and study the whole counsel of God.

### III. Prophecy Reveals God's Absolute Sovereignty

a. Satan has conspired to dethrone the God of the universe and seat himself above the stars of God [Isa. 14] with his Antichrist [II Thess. 2] on the throne in Jerusalem.

b. Prophecy reveals the Great I AM is sovereign and will soon put down Satan's cosmic rebellion of evil. [He was defeated at Calvary and has been sentenced to destruction. It will be carried out!]

c. Rev. 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

Ps. 146:10 The LORD shall reign forever— Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!

### IV. Prophecy Reveals God's Providential Plan

a. He is overseeing and working through all the affairs of man to perform His providential plan of the ages. The *Mystery of the Ages* [Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:17; I Cor. 2:7; Eph. 3] is being brought to pass in God's good time.

b. Prophecy conveys the signs pertinent to all of the ages and points to the close of this present age [Age of Church] and to the beginning of His Millennial Kingdom Age!

Eph. 1:9-10 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, <sup>10</sup> that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth— in Him.

Rev. 10:7 but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

### V. Prophecy Verifies The Bible As God's Absolute Word

a. Fulfilled prophecy is one of the best evidences the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

b. Prophecy is God's signature on world history and on the future of the world.

c. Prophetic content. ONLY an alpha and omega Creator could possibly foretell and pre-record an outline of world history from beginning to end.

Isa. 42:9 Behold, the former things are come to pass and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them

### VI. The Protection of Prophecy

a. Jesus knew that an understanding of prophecy would protect us from future deceptions.

Matt. 24:4-5 "See to it that no one misleads you.<sup>5</sup> For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.,

Note: This instruction is so important it is recorded for us again in Mark 13 and Luke 21.

Claims for some new doctrine or new method of understanding the Bible appear with increasing frequency. You should NOT be surprised at the spread of false teaching.

There is an exponential explosion of false teaching & false prophets.

II Tim. 3:1 This know also, that in the last days PERILOUS times shall come...

Interesting note: The Greek word for perilous = chalepos = "to reduce the strength of an intended target" in the specific relationship of making the one targeted more susceptible to a furious, fierce and dangerous onslaught. The power of darkness in the Last Days will intensify their conspiratorial strategy against Christ's followers for the design of rendering them as an easy prey. This ominous stalking of the prey is depicted in I Pet. 5:8 where Satan is portrayed as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Consider: It appears the supernatural enemies of God [Satan-demons] and the earthly enemies of Christ and His Church, will conspire together to extricate a covert supernatural assault in an attempt to undermine the very foundations of the "Christian strength" on the earth in the Last Days BEFORE the final Satanic offensive against Israel during the Great Tribulation.

John 16:1 "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble."

If you know what Jesus says about the future, you won't fall into the trap of panic or distress. The prophetic word of God is designed to convey enough information so you will be enabled by the Holy Spirit to "gain strength from its study" for enduring the onslaught of evil and perversion as the Church begins to fade in power during the latter days.

Amos 3:7 "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." When God's prophecies come to pass exactly as He foretold, it strengthens our faith to trust Him for care and protection.

Beware: While God wants to place you under prophecy's umbrella of protection, the devil wants you to keep out. Satan is continually increasing his strategy of religious deception by sending forth many false teachers and by castigating and polluting the prophetic message by devaluing and obstructing the doctrinal study of Biblical prophecy. Many churches are allowing him an easy victory in this demonic conspiracy. Satan knows if you read Revelation, you'll learn of his coming doom. You'll see that the adversary who is tempting you every day has already been assigned to a new location: the Lake of Fire. Luke 21:8; I John 4:1; II Tim. 4:2-4; I Tim. 4:1-2; II Pet. 2:1

## VII. The Preparation of Prophecy

a. Jesus told many parables to illustrate the importance of being prepared for His coming.

Lesson: Always be ready for the Lord's return. It will be as unpredictable as a thief in the night.

I Thess. 5:4 "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief." Prophecy will prepare you to meet the Lord anytime.

b. Prophecy also prepares us for future events. News of wars or rumors of wars, natural disasters and lawlessness is rapidly increasing. These grim headlines can discourage and worry us. Yet Jesus told His disciples to look for these signs of the end of the age.

Truth: World Calamities Never Take God By Surprise!

John 16:4 Jesus said, "These things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them."

By studying Biblical prophecy, you will be PREPARED for the days ahead.

Even though the time of sorrows is coming, The Day Of Our Redemption Is Drawing Near!

### VIII. The Practicality of Prophecy

Some Christians treat prophecy as a purely intellectual pursuit with no practical applications. If we just walk away and feel smarter than when we started, or we have a pile of manuscripts and can boast of our academic studies, what difference does that make?

The book of Revelation or prophetic Scripture is not only for understanding—it is for application. It's possible to get on a prophetic kick that is so future minded that we forget that for each prophetic message, there is a present day application

If you are aware of Christ's imminent return, it will impact your desire to witness to others about the Gospel. If we take prophesy seriously, it will affect the way we live.

David Jeremiah: "Some of the most energetic people I know in the church have been transformed by their study of prophecy. They're ministry oriented, reaching out to the lost because they understand what will happen in the future. Prophecy is intensely practical—it is the driving force behind evangelism and righteous living."

### IX. Prophecy Purifies The Hope & The Life Of The Believer

a. The prospect of imminently meeting Jesus face to face should cause us to lead a sober and vigilant life.

b. The ominous prevalence of the signs of the times only serves to further intensify the brightness of the Christian spiritual lamp.

All the New Testament writers testify to the fact:

Living With The Anticipation Of The Lord's Return Will Motivate Holy Living. - I Pet. 1:6-9 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it [your faith] is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup> whom having not seen you love Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.

I Pet. 4:12-13 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; <sup>13</sup> but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. I John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. <sup>3</sup> And Everyone Who Has This Hope In Him Purifies Himself, just as He is pure.

### X. Prophecy Builds & Strengthens Faith

a. It enhances the scriptural foundations upon which our faith rests.

b. We do not look for Christ in vain. EVERY word pertaining to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and to the establishment of His Kingdom is legitimate.

c. Prophecy infuses deeper spiritual strength to us as we watch and contemplate the multitude of the end times' signs. The Trusty Prophetic Word:

II Pet. 1:16-21 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.<sup>17</sup> For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And we HEARD THIS VOICE which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the Prophetic Word Confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;<sup>20</sup> knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,<sup>21</sup> for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

#### XI. Prophecy Strengthens Our Patience

a. Many become underzealous in their attitudes about prophetic study, lose sight of its vitality and fail to comprehend the signs of the times pertaining to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus Christ. They DO NOT understand the providence of God.

b. Result: (1) Become agnostics or scoffers and view Bible prophecy as stories of Church legend that have no immediate impact.

(2). Many become irritated by the prophetic message because they lack the longsuffering of Christ who is not willing that anyone perish.

(3) Become disillusioned and begin to question the value of prophecy.

(4) Question the sure promises and absolute landmark signs because it has taken too long.

(5) Succumb to a pessimistic spirit about prophecy

(6) Risk becoming open to demonic deception about the message of prophecy

II Pet. 3:3-4 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,<sup>4</sup> and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation."

They lend credence to the absolution or hiding of God's prophetic words!

I Pet.1:13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

II Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

James 5:7-8 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.<sup>8</sup> You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Isa. 40:31 But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

## XII. Prophecy Will Help You Make Sense Out of Suffering

If you obtain all of your theology from your circumstances, you'll be hopelessly confused.

Romans 8:18 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us."

Through prophecy, we understand God is not finished yet.

The tragedies of this earth will be turned into the Triumphs Of Heaven.

## XIII. Prophecy Brings Comfort/Consolation To The Christian

a. There is a growing international sense of turmoil and anxiety.

ONLY the Bible with its prophetic assurances conveys any hope for tomorrow.

Heb. 10:25 God exhorted us to "be comforted in our hearts" and encourage fellow believers as they observe the signs of the times and the approaching Day of the Lord.

Titus 2:13 Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing [rapture] of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

I Thess. 5:9-11 For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

Wherefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as also ye do.

I Thess. 4:15-18 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

## XIV. Prophecy Alerts Us To The "Signs of the Times"

a. Bible prophecy is like a roadmap with historical features strewn along its path to convey to us where we are along the highway of world/human history.

b. We can use 20/20 hindsight to observe the landmark events in history and use the prophetic word of the Bible to find them in God's overall scheme of the Ages.

c. We can use the 20/20 prophetic vision of God to anticipate the coming events in our world.

d. I believe Bible prophecy is providentially connected with the re-budding of Israel.

e. Signs of the times are exponentially exploding before our eyes!

f. The ardently watching prophecy student should be able to discern the "signs of the times."

Matt. 16:3 And in the morning, ' *There will be* a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times.

According to Barna Research (2003) conducted on the awareness of the "signs of the times," only 4% of preachers and 2% of church members considered Bible prophecy as being significant.

## XV. Prophecy Exposes Satan's Plan

a. He is conspiring with the nations of this world to deny Israel a place among the nations and to deceive Israel into a false covenant with him. [Dan. 9:27]

- b. He desires to be worshipped as God & will utilize the Antichrist to make that desire a reality.
- c. He plans to seat his Son of Perdition on a throne in the city of Jerusalem inside a rebuilt third Jewish Temple. [Abomination of Desolation]
- d. Prophecy exposes the entire historic and last days scheme of Satan to destroy the children of Israel and to supplant Jesus Christ on His rightful throne.

Isa.:14:12-14...I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...

II Thess. 2:4 Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

#### XVI. Prophecy Reveals Satan's Final Defeat

- a. Satan is destined to be bound in chains and cast into the bottomless pit for 1000 years.
- b. As the nations of the world conspire together to encircle Jerusalem and Israel, prophecy conveys that Satan's evil scheme is only setting a TRAP for all the unrighteous!

Rev. 20:1-2 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the Devil* and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Rev. 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Rom. 16:20a And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

#### XVII. Prophecy Highlights Christ's /Our Victory

- a. Through His victory over Satan, we shall live with Him forever.
- b. Death & hell have no dominion over us.
- c. His return will usher in His Kingdom of glory and righteousness.

I John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Rev. 5:9-10 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, <sup>10</sup> And have made us<sup>l</sup> kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

Rev. 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

Rev. 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Rom. 6:8-9 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

## XVIII. The Prize of Prophecy

Revelation is the only book in the Bible that motivates its readers by promising a prize.

Rev. 1:3 "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near."

Rev. 22:7 "Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

### Ezekiel 33:1-6

Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.

"But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'

A watchman was to sound a warning whenever he saw danger approaching. This partly explains why prophecy is so important and why God wants His Church to teach and preach those prophecies. God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

We live in "Perilous Times" and we have God's Word to inform us concerning the end times. We should be fully aware of the signs pertaining to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming so we will NOT be caught in the same position as national Israel who failed to recognize His 1<sup>st</sup> coming. Israel reveled in the idea they were the lawful children of Abraham, but unlike Abraham who YEARNED to see the coming of Jesus, the children of Israel became blinded to the greatest joy of Abraham. They even took up stones to cast at Jesus for stating he was before Abraham and actually greater than Abraham.

It would be sadder for the Church to be found ignorant about His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming when He has given us SO much information concerning it in His Word. Christians will have NO excuse if Jesus should return and find us, like Peter, [asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane] and therefore IGNORANT about the time of His 2<sup>nd</sup> visitation.