



Magnolia Bible Church Men's Group - Prophecy Series

Lesson #1: Why Study Prophecy?

Thursday, September 8, 2016

For most Believers the word “prophecy” likely conjures up images somewhere between a white-haired, boney-fingered, old man calling down judgment on the nation of Israel and a fast talking, TV preacher spouting gloom and doom while doing his best to predict the date for the return of the Messiah. Unfortunately, neither of these two extremes do justice to the wonderful world of prophecy as outlined in the Bible.

Literally every book in the Bible contains either some element of the predicted future or fulfilled prophecy. When you take a moment to think about that, it is mind-blowing. Unfortunately, few churches today teach prophecy as most pastors cite too much controversy and too little certainty to warrant its teaching. For this reason very few Christians have any exposure to prophecy and even fewer have a good understanding regarding End Times and God's plans for the future of mankind. The purpose of this series is to increase our understanding of End Time Prophecy and improve our confidence in understanding some of the fundamental aspects associated with prophecy as outlined in Scripture.

For our opening lesson, we are going to address five reasons why we should study prophecy. They are listed below, along with a brief narrative on each.

- 1. Prophecy is a Central Theme in Scripture.** God's inclusion of prophecy in His Word is reason enough to justify our studying it; however, when as Believers we stand before Jesus at His judgment seat, the Bema (2 Corinthians 5:10), we will be asked to give an account of our study of the Word; prophecy will undoubtedly be a topic in which He is interested in our having studied. *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15, NIV).
- 2. God's Awesomeness Reflected in His Divine Attributes.** God's omniscience (all-knowing) is a unique and critically-important attributed reserved only for Him. God is limited by neither time nor space (i.e., omnipresent); hence, His ability to know the future is merely an extension of His omniscience. Consider the following Divine attributes of God as presented in Scripture.¹

Timeless:

- Genesis 1:1 - “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”
- Revelation 1:8 - “I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was, and who is to come. The Almighty.”
- Revelation 4:8d - “Even under his wings, Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.’”

All Knowing

- Psalm 147:5 - “Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.”
- Isaiah 40:28 - “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, He will not grow tired or weary and his understanding no one can fathom.”

Omniscient

- 1 Chronicles 28:9 - “...for the Lord searches every heart, and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, we will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.”
- Proverbs 15:3 - “The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.”
- Psalm 33:13 - “From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth...”

¹ <http://www.allaboutgod.com/god-is-infinite-bible-verses-faq.htm>

Omnipotent

- Genesis 17:1 - "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty'..."
- Jeremiah 32:17 - "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you."
- Matthew 19:26 - "Jesus looked at them and said. 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

Omnipresent

- Joshua 1:5 - "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you."
- 1 Chronicles 16:34 - "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; his love endures forever."
- Psalm 33:11 - "The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."
- Hebrews 13:5 - "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have. Because God said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'

3. Prophecy Provides Warnings Regarding Sin in our Lives. Much of the Old Testament's prophecies concerned God's judgment of Israel because of their sin and the associated consequences. This is a major observation when reading through the Old Testament, especially the Major and Minor prophets. The message for you and me is that God takes sin very seriously. There is always a consequence for sin and the Lord does not turn a "blind eye" to our willful and intentional disobedience. The fact that God allowed His chosen people, both Israel and Judah, to be destroyed by the Assyrians and Babylonians, respectively, demonstrates that their willful disobedience had disastrous consequences. Although we do live in the "era of grace" because of Christ's death on the cross, there is still a consequence for sin. We must do everything we can through the power of the Holy Spirit to rid "besetting patterns of sin" from our lives.

4. Fulfilled Prophecy Improve our Faith. Fulfilled prophecy improves our confidence in that God does (and can do) what He says He is going to do. There are literally thousands of passages in the Bible concerning fulfilled prophecies (e.g., 456 alone concerning Jesus as the Messiah!). As you and I study Scripture we can rest assured that God's Word is true and should be our only measuring stick for truth.

5. Live Expecting Christ's Return. We need to live holy lives realizing that Jesus can return at any moment (Revelation 16:15 and I Thessalonians 5:2). As Believers, this should be a driving factor in how we live every day. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:16 (NIV), we are to "make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." God in His brilliance knows that if you and I do not know the hour when His Son will return, we are more likely to live life "on the edge of our seats" in anticipating His arrival. For us to know that date and time of Jesus' return would only breed complacency on our part.

Questions for Consideration

1. Have you previously studied prophecy? If so, what do you remember and how has it impacted your life?
2. Jesus's return can come at any time, like a "thief in the night" (Revelation 16:15 and I Thessalonians 5:2).
 - a. How should that impact how we live?
 - b. What are some activities we should and should not be doing?
3. As we start this series, what are some of the things you would like to learn as we study prophecy together? In what ways would you like to see the Lord change your life?