



Part 4: "The Benefits of Bible Prophecy"

Sunday, March 10th, 2024

We're continuing our study called "Discerning the Development of our Days" this morning. If you'll recall from last Sunday we talked about Keeping our Eye on Israel. Israel is considered to be the Super Sign of Bible Prophecy.

We also looked at the eternal covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 which is still in effect today. All the promises God made to Abraham at that time have either been already fulfilled –

Including many in the Old Testament – or they will be fulfilled between now and the end of a 7-year period of time known in the Bible as the Tribulation, also called "The Time of Jacob's Trouble."

We often think that the tribulation is all about the Antichrist. But that couldn't be farther from the truth. The tribulation is all about God's people, Israel. That's why it's also called "The Time of Jacob's Trouble" in the Bible – the name "Jacob" being a reference to the Jews.

READ Jeremiah 30:1-9 – These promises to Israel will be fulfilled by God at the end of the Tribulation.

Both the O.T. book of Daniel and the N.T. book of Revelation have Israel as the primary focus during the tribulation. The key to understanding biblical prophecy is knowing and understanding what God says in the Bible about the Jewish people, His love for them, and His plans for them even though they rejected Jesus in His day and still reject Him now in our day.

In addition, Jesus dedicated a major portion of teaching on the future on the Jewish people in Matthew chapters 24-25 – a passage called “The Olivet Discourse”, named that because Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives when He delivered it.

You’re going to learn a little bit more about that in Day 2 of our readings this week in the 40 Days of Prophecy book. If you weren’t able to be here last Sunday, let me encourage you to go to our APP or website and watch last Sunday’s message about Israel.

So that’s why we started our turn in this series onto the highway of Bible Prophecy by beginning with Israel. And today we’re moving off the on-ramp of Israel and onto the primary lane of study by beginning a 40 Day study of Bible Prophecy.

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40 Days Through Bible Prophecy

During the next 40 days as we read and study and ask God to give us His understanding about Bible prophecy, by the time we’re done...

- You'll have a good handle on all the major prophetic events that are predicted in the Bible
- You'll become familiar with the prominent personalities of the end times
- You'll have a good grasp of the proper order of prophetic events
- And, you'll be familiar with the unique terms associated with prophecy and their timing as well

Throughout our study we're going to be connected to biblical issues that will impact your spiritual life and grow your walk with Christ. We'll come to understand...

- That Only God knows the future
- That The Bible is God's Word and therefore we can trust it – all of it – including what it says about the end times events
- That God is sovereign and is in control of all that occurs in the world
- That God has a plan for humanity, and He has a plan for each and every one of us here today
- That there is a new world coming and you'll want to be a part of it
- That all of us who know Christ as Savior will experience a joyful reunion with Christ Himself and with all our Christian loved ones in heaven
- And we'll understand that Jesus is coming sooner than we think!

You can pick up this daily devotional book today in the lobby and our daily readings begin tomorrow. This week you're going to learn about how to understand prophecy and its importance.

Bible prophecy doesn't have to be confusing, and I hope and pray after this study that it won't. Let's ask the Lord to help us in our study this morning.

Let's begin with one of the character qualities about God that make Him God which serves as the foundation for understanding Bible prophecy.

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God's Transcendent Nature:

God is above His creation, distinct from creation, outside of creation; He would exist if there were no creation (and He did before creation); He is the only transcendent Being. God created time, yet is outside of time, not limited by it. Everything exists by Him, and for Him, to bring Him honor and glory.

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"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways,' This is the Lord's declaration. 'For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

Isaiah 55:8-9

God's transcendent nature means that for God, everything is right now. There is no past, present, or future with God. That's hard for us to understand, isn't it?! God doesn't need Time Change Sunday (and it sounds like Congress doesn't either. 😊)

God stands outside of creation, meaning He's not bound by the limitations of His creation. He sees all things, knows all things – from the beginning of time to the end of time – which He created.

Everything for God is in the present tense, MEANING, He not only knows the future, He created the future – even though it hasn't happened it. To God, everything that's in our future exists to God as if it's already happened.

Consider this fact about God, I think God has the right to reveal to us what He wants to reveal to us about our past, our present, and our future, which is all just a little short timeline in the existence of God, the transcendent One.

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“Dear friends, don't overlook this one fact: With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.”

2 Peter 3:8

If a day to God is like a thousand years, and vice versa as the Bible says, then it should sober us and humble us to look to the Scriptures and trust God about what He, the transcendent One, has to say about the future of the world – and He has said a lot.

NOTES:

- Over one-fifth of the Bible addresses the future at the time it was written. (Many of these prophecies were about Jesus and His first coming to earth to provide for our salvation by dying on the cross and rising again.)

- Altogether 27% of the Bible is prophetic – 8,352 verses out of a total of 31,124 verses in the entire Bible.
- 318 times in the New Testament's 210 chapters Christ's second coming is mentioned

God is serious about us knowing about the future that He has created. Why? Well I believe it's not just so we're clued in to what's going to happen, but more importantly so that we are clued in to who He is as God, and to help us prepare for the future.

It's been said that anyone who knows the future and doesn't prepare for it, is a fool. God says...

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***"A sensible person sees danger and takes cover,
but the inexperienced keep going and are punished."***

Proverbs 22:3; 27:12

Bible prophecy reveals that severe dangers for the world are coming – dangers that this world has never experienced before. As Proverbs says, a sensible person who sees these dangers coming will take action, will take cover. And those who don't will be punished.

And that cover in times of danger is found only in Jesus Christ. While God's people the Jews are the focus of the tribulation, the centerpiece of Bible prophecy is the second coming of Christ. Turn to Revelation 22.

At the very end of the Bible in the last part of the last chapter, we find Jesus reminding us once again of His return and His invitation to humanity to spiritually take cover in Him.

READ Revelation 22:7,12-17

When did Jesus say He was coming? SOON! (Say “Jesus is coming soon”). And He said he’s bringing his reward with Him to repay each person for the work that represents their life. Jesus is saying that a reckoning day is coming. Everyone will be held accountable to Him for the way they lived their lives.

And to make sure we understand who He is and what He’s capable of, Jesus emphasized in verse 13, that He is “the Alpha, and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Jesus is saying that He is the transcendent God himself and everything in the universe runs through Him.

You want access to God the Father? It runs through Jesus. Salvation and eternal life? Runs through Jesus. Forgiveness of sins? Runs through Jesus. Eternal reward? Runs through Jesus. Eternal peace? Joy? Love? Fulfillment? Runs thru Jesus.

Jesus will be the new sheriff in town – if you can call the universe a town – and He’s going to replace the current sheriff, Satan – the Prince of the power of the air - who’s been allowed by God to temporarily run things around here, but his evil days are coming to an end. Praise God, Jesus is coming back!!!!

And in light of that return, He opens His arms of love to the world and says, “Come”. Are you thirsty for something better? Jesus says come to Him. Are you thirsty for the joy you see in others but have never had yourself? Come to Jesus.

Are you thirsty to have peace in your soul instead of fear, and doubt and worry? Jesus says come. He’s ready to give you everything you’ve spent your life searching for –

Spiritual water that will quench your soul, stop the war inside your heart and bring to an end the turmoil of trying to find what you need in the world instead of finding it in the only place its available: in the arms of Jesus who died on the cross for you.

Bible prophecy teaches us that Jesus is coming soon and when He does, it will be too late for anyone who has failed to put their faith in Him and believe in Him as their Savior. That time and opportunity will have come and gone.

In light of these truths, I challenge anyone here or anyone watching our service today, if you haven’t put your faith in Jesus, the one who died on the cross to pay for your sins and rose again, trust Him today. Ask Jesus to forgive you of your sin and give your life to follow Him as your forever Lord and King.

The Bible calls that transaction of faith salvation, and it's the only way to be ready for Jesus soon return, it's the only way to be reconciled with God because of your sin, and it's the only way to eternal life. So don't put it off.

Come to Jesus today. Come to Him like the young lady did this past week who bowed her head in prayer and asked Jesus to forgive her sins and be her Savior.

There's an old story about an ancient king who would often ask his court jesters known, as fools, to come in and entertain him when his spirits were down.

He had one that he especially liked and one day he presented a special scepter to him as the greatest fool in the king's court. A time came when the aged king became sick and lay on his deathbed.

They called for the king's favorite fool to come see the king and to somehow raise his spirits at the end of his life. He came and he asked the king if he had made preparations for life after death, if he had preparations to stand before a great King, God Almighty. The king replied that he had made no such spiritual preparations.

The fool then took the special scepter that the king had given to him long ago and handed it back to him and he said to the king, "Then, you are the greater fool."

How foolish it would be if anyone here today would listen to this message about the coming return of Jesus Christ and the prophetic events given in

the Bible and fail to make preparations for this certain future by putting their faith in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. Don't be that fool!

If you have placed your faith in Christ, you're a disciple, a follower of Christ, then studying and learning prophecy can have a profound impact on your life as well.

Quote:

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“The more your present life is informed by the glorious truths of the prophetic future, the more you will gain an eternal perspective that will help you navigate the difficult circumstances you might face during this short earthly life.” ~ Author Ron Rhodes

Who doesn't have difficult circumstances or hasn't had them? We all have, we all do, and we all will. So let's look at how studying and learning prophecy can impact your life now and for eternity...

Here's...

(Slide) The Spiritual Benefits of Bible Prophecy to the Christian
Knowing Bible Prophecy will...

1. Keep you from judging others – 1 Cor. 4:5 (READ)

It can be easy to see the way other Christians are living and want to cast judgment on them. And while there is a right time and place for inspecting the spiritual fruit of one another in a proper and biblical way...

God wants us to leave the judging to Him because He's the only One who can see into the heart of every person and make a correct and righteous judgment. And this verse says Jesus will take care of all that when He comes again.

So don't worry that things might not seem fair and balanced in this life as you see how others live. Jesus is coming and He will deal with things and people when the time is right and in His own way. He's the perfect judge. Let Him be the judge of others.

(Slide) The Spiritual Benefits of Bible Prophecy to the Christian
Knowing Bible Prophecy will...

- 2. Bring new life to your observance of communion – READ 1 Cor. 11:26; Rev. 19:6-8 (READ)**

In a few minutes we're going to observe communion together. When we do, part of the significance of communion and our participation is the reminder that Jesus promised that He's coming again.

The One who died for us is coming again and that's something we should all be looking forward to with great anticipation, when we will see Jesus and worship Him and give Him our thanks for all He's done for us.

Communion is also a reminder of a future event when we, the church – the bride of Christ, will be united in spiritual marriage to Jesus the Lamb of God, the bridegroom.

That will be followed by the biggest and grandest wedding celebration of all time and for all time in heaven to celebrate all of God's people – Jew and Gentile alike – who have placed their faith in Jesus, being joined in forever union with Christ, never to be separated, always in living fellowship with Jesus our Savior.

These events called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19, and the second coming of Christ, are foreshadowed in our observance of Communion. They should be on our minds and in our hearts as we partake of the elements of communion together.

(Slide) The Spiritual Benefits of Bible Prophecy to the Christian
Knowing Bible Prophecy will...

- 3. Help you focus on the eternal more than the temporal – Col. 3:1-4**
(READ)

As followers of Christ, it should be our natural inclination to yearn for and to want to be with Jesus. It should be our heart's desire to see Jesus face to face and to personally and corporately hunger to worship Him, at His throne, and to praise Him for who He is and what He's done for us.

The reality of Jesus' soon return should motivate us to want to think about heaven and to long for our eternal home because that is what we have been saved for.

When you were saved, spiritually speaking, God raised you up from spiritual death to spiritual life. Your sin was crucified with Jesus on the cross. Your old life was put to death with Jesus and now you have new life in and with Christ...

And it's a new life of faith with God through Jesus that going to last forever and Jesus is coming back so we all can consummate that relationship of worship in person with Him.

(Slide) The Spiritual Benefits of Bible Prophecy to the Christian
Knowing Bible Prophecy will...

- 4. Grow your love for others, especially the family of God, and equip you for a life of holiness – 1 Thess. 3:11-13 (READ)**

When Jesus comes back, He will long to find us – His people, His church, loving each other with an overflowing love, and living blameless lives and living holy lives mimicking Him, because He is holy.

If Jesus were to return today, is that what He would see in your life? In my life? Is that what He would find in our church – a group of people committed to one another in overflowing love? Do you love the brothers and sisters of Christ in your church family?

Does that love motivate you to forgive, to be patient with each other, to not hold grudges, to not make and keep a list of wrongs, to not be rude or self-seeking, but to seek the good of others in the family of God?

Let us keep our spiritual eyes fixed on the soon return of Christ and let that truth grow in us an overflowing love for one another and a lives that are blameless and holy like our Lord Jesus.

(Slide) The Spiritual Benefits of Bible Prophecy to the Christian
Knowing Bible Prophecy will...

- 5. Give you a greater sense of and desire for the fellowship of your church family - Hebrews 10:24-25 (READ)**

The word “day” here refers to everything included in the last days including the return of Christ. Since we are living in the last days, we should have an urgency to want to come together with our church family for fellowship and support and encouragement of each other.

As the clouds of God’s judgment begin to darken over this world in the last days, every follower of Christ is going to need the family of God like never before.

It reminds me of the old adage in sports: you play the way you practice. If you give 100% effort in practice, that’s going to prepare you for and help you when you fighting for victory in the game.

And spiritually speaking, if you make it your habit to involve yourself with the church family, to engage with others in the body, to build relationships with others and become immersed in the family of God....

As the time gets closer to Christ's return, and the labor pains of this world start manifesting themselves in all sorts of evil and disasters, and everything Christ predicted will happen before His return, you will find yourself needing the family of God and if you've prioritized your church family already, it will be a seamless transition when that comes.

For some Christians who keep the church family at arms-length, it's going to be harder on them because the support system they're going to need hasn't been cultivated. We need other now, and we're going to need other in the future like never before.

(Slide) The Spiritual Benefits of Bible Prophecy to the Christian
Knowing Bible Prophecy will...

6. Build your patience and stability for life on this side of heaven –
James 5:7-8 (READ)

Listen, we're lowans right? If anyone can understand the patience that a farmer needs it should but is! Not too many of us here are farmers, but we get the analogy. Farming takes patience. You plant your seeds and it takes months before you see the harvest. But as sure the sun rises each day, the harvest comes. So be patient.

And Jesus is coming back, he's coming soon. Let His return build in each one of us patience, a patience that brings stability in our walk with Christ knowing that He is going to keep His promise, as sure as the sun will come up again tomorrow.

(Slide) The Spiritual Benefits of Bible Prophecy to the Christian
Knowing Bible Prophecy will...

7. Aid you in living a pure life for the glory of God – 1 John 3:2-3 (READ)

When we believe that Jesus is coming again soon, it provides an accountability for us. Knowing Jesus is coming helps us to live the way Christ wants us to live, as if He could come today – and He COULD come today.

Let's Christ's return be a form of accountability in your life. Let His return guide what you do, what you say, your priorities and your habits and your commitments – judge all these in light of Christ's soon return – and let that guide you in all these areas.

(Slide) The Spiritual Benefits of Bible Prophecy to the Christian
Knowing Bible Prophecy will...

8. Increase your passion for spiritually lost souls – Jude 20-23 (READ)

When we live with the reality that Jesus is coming again and in light of all of Bible prophecy, it increases our desire to see no one face the eternal judgment of God in hell.

It motivates us to pray for the salvation of the lost and tell others about Jesus and to be faithful witnesses for Christ, and to seek to have testimonies for Christ that reflect His character so others will see Christ in us.

Do you have a passion for lost souls this morning? Is there anyone in your sphere of influence who is being impacted by your testimony? By your words? By your prayers? Has anyone heard the gospel from you?

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN. The events of the end times are coming and eternity hangs in the balance for your family and friends and the people of our community and our world. I pray God gives us a growing passion for lost souls today.