

CHAPTER ONE

WHY GIVE HEED TO PROPHECY?

II Peter 1:16-21

INTRODUCTION

16. For we did not follow cleverly devised takes when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

17. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased,"-

18. and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

19. And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

20. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,

21. for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 Peter 1:16-21 (NAS)

There are three ways in which we can approach the subject of prophecy. First, we can ignore it. We can say that it is not important. But how can we say we believe in the Bible and yet ignore prophecy. There are many passages of scripture which speak of things yet to happen. Surely God doesn't want us to ignore certain parts of his Word.

Another way we can approach prophecy is to go overboard and do nothing but preach and teach prophecy. This means that we would be neglecting the majority of God's Word. I like peach ice cream, but I don't want it three times a day, every day in the year. So, while prophecy is important and ought to have a vital place in the life of the church, we must not excluded many other important Bible truths.

The third way we can approach this subject is to seek the whole counsel of God. We need to preach and teach and study all the great truths of God's Word. We need to understand what God has to say about sin, salvation, life, and death, time and eternity.

Our scripture says that we should take heed to prophecy, as a "lamp shining in a dark place." And it is true, we are living in a dark cold world. There is trouble on every hand. But the promises of prophecy tell us that God will be victorious; and that we who follow Him will come safely through every trial and reach our destination. The Christian of today needs to be concerned about world conditions, but he need not despair.

For example: the world fears destruction by the H-bomb. But the Christian need not fear world destruction. For the Bible teaches that world destruction will not come by the hands of man, but by the hand of God through the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Since we have nothing to fear, why should we spend our time studying prophecy? Let me suggest several reasons.

1. Because it will strengthen our faith in the Bible

No one has a greater faith in the Bible as God's Word than the student of prophecy. The Bible foretells many things; then as the student watches prophecy come true, his faith in the Bible is strengthened. Let us consider some prophecies fulfilled.

Take the case of Babylon. No ancient city could compare with Babylon. It was far greater than Rome. It had an area of fifteen square miles. Its walls were eighty-seven feet thick and three hundred and fifty feet high. Its many gates were of solid brass. Great towers dotted the wall. A deep moat of water thirty feet wide surrounded the city. The Euphrates river ran through the city from north to south. Its buildings and houses were beautiful. The city's parks and playgrounds were the wonder of the ancient world. More than a million people enjoyed an affluent life in this great city.

How could he be so foolish as to predict the downfall of such a city? Humanly speaking, no army in the world could ^{Cyrus} ~~subdue~~ Babylon. Yet God spoke through Isaiah and predicted that Babylon would be destroyed. He even gave the name of the man who would lead his army in destroying the city. The man was Cyrus and the remarkable thing about Isaiah's prophecy was that Cyrus had not yet been born. (Isa. 21:9; 45) The people who heard Isaiah must have thought him to be somewhat of a fool to make such a prediction. They must have laughed - even as people laugh today - when someone takes the prediction of Christ Second Coming to serious.

But the years sped by and one day an army camped outside of the walls of Babylon. The leader of that army was a man named Cyrus. The people inside the city were not worried. The city walls were strong and their food supply would last twenty years. Cyrus' army began to build a deep ditch around the city. The Babylonians must have laughed at this work. But one night, while the people of the city were drinking and feasting,

Cyrus divided his army, sending one-half to the north and one-half to the south end of the city. He then turned the Euphrates River into the

great ditch and soon the river bed was dry. Then his soldiers marched in and before dawn the city had been captured. God was fulfilling prophecy.

Now consider the ancient city of Tyre. Tyre was the New York of its day. Ships from all the known world lay at anchor in her wonderful harbor. But in 590 B.C. God spoke through Ezekiel, saying, (Ezekiel 26:4,14), "They shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers; and I will scrape her soil from her, and make her a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets; you shall never be rebuilt; for I the Lord have spoken, says the Lord God."

The years passed and Tyre was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Only its ruins remained. Then later when Alexander the Great built a road through the area, the demand for material was so great that he scraped the dust of the city and used it. God said, "you shall be built no more." Other cities have been destroyed and rebuilt, Jerusalem 17 times, but never Tyre. Even to this day. God said it would never be built again and He kept his word. As I study these things my faith in the Bible as God's inspired Word increases.

Then consider the prophecies fulfilled concerning the first coming of Jesus Christ. The O.T. tells where Jesus was to be born - Belthlem, and that he would be born of a virgin. The O.T. tells how he was to live and die. Isaiah tells us how Jesus would suffer and how He would be buried with the rich. In the Gospel of Matthew we read how Christ suffered and how he was buried in the tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea.

These are a few. There are many more. As we study these things we are forced to say, "The Bible is indeed the inspired Word of God."

2. BECAUSE A STUDY OF PROPHECY HELPS US TO ^{BETTER} UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE BE

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not

to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"(2 Tim.2:15). It is one thing to believe the Bible, it is another thing to understand it. Understanding comes through sympathetic study and prayer. Understanding comes as we apply the lessons and commandments of God to our lives. As we live what we learn. The Bible tells us about the great things of the past and we need to study these things. But it also tells us about the great things of the future and we need to study this also.

3. BECAUSE CHRIST CONDEMNED THOSE WHO WERE INGORANT OF PROPHECY

Matthew 16:2-3: Turn and read.

These people were like so many people today. People who have much worldly wisdom, but little scriptural knowledge. They toss the Bible aside, saying, "I don't understand it." And they leave it there.

When Daniel had a vision from God, he said, "I sought the meaning of it. We ought to seek the meaning of God's prophetic teachings. We ought to read the Bible and pray for the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to its truth. The lesson is this: If Jesus condemned the people of His day for thier lack of understanding, how much more will he condemn us who have so much more knowledge at hand than they had.

4. BECAUSE PROPHECY BRINGS GREAT SPRIITUAL JOY.

One who reads the Bible and studies its prophecies is not lost in darkness. He knows who holds the future. He knows that in the end Christ will be victories.

5. BECAUSE OF THE SPECIAL BLESSING BROMISED

Revelation1:3 - "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep these things that are written." Jesus promises a reward to those who study this prophecy.

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with the pastor and chose a lot. Then the pastor said to him, "You have chosen a resting place for your body - have you chosen a future home for your soul?" The rich man said, "You are the first person who ever mentioned this matter to me. What must I do to be saved?" Soon the pastor had led the man to faith in Christ the Saviour.

I would like to ask you the same question. Have you trusted your soul to the Saviour who is coming soon?
