

Title: Why Give Heed to Prophecy?

Text: II Peter 1:16-21

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.

God does not 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, as you well know. 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 our church, we must not exclude 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 Christians 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 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.

Now who would 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. Isaish 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 asheamed, 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. Understand^m 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: Tunn 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 PROMISED

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.

6. Because a STUDY OF PROPHECY HELPS US TO LIVE BETTER CHRISTIAN LIVES.

The greatest note in prophecy is the truth about the Lord's return. As Christians we expect Christ to come at any moment. In view of this hope we should be living our lives in such a way that we will be neither afraid nor ashamed when Jesus comes back.

7. BECAUSE A STUDY OF PROPHECY MAKES US BETTER SOUL-WINNERS.

The student of prophecy knows that the time is short and many people are not ready to meet God. This in itself should cause us to be concerned about the salvation of our friends and loved ones.

When I was a boy, my father, before leaving for work each Saturday, would tell me to clean up the yard. I knew he would come home at twelve o'clock. Often I would play and neglect the yard until 11:00. Then I would realize that time was running out and I would set to work to try and finish before my father returned. The Heavenly Father has given us the task of witnessing for Him. This is our calling and this is our purpose as a church. Many Bible scholars say that it is nearly 12:00 on the eternal time table. And frankly, some of you need to get busy winning souls to Christ.

The mission of evangelism is not the pastors. It is the responsibility of each person who names Christ as saviour.

The O.T. prophets warned the people of things to come. We are the prophets of this day. Christ is coming, not only to take up his own, but to bring judgment upon unbelievers. When Jesus told the Apostle John that he was coming, John said: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Can you say that? Are you ready to meet Christ? Have you personally asked Christ into your life?

In our country many cemeteries are owned by the churches. And usually the pastor is in charge of selling the graves to those who request one. A wealthy man came to purchase a lot. He walked out into the cemetery

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?
