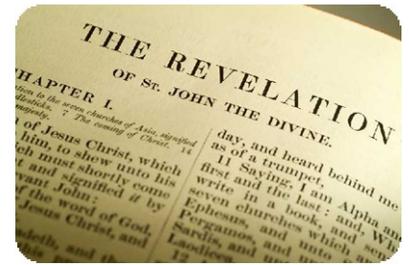


The Importance of Biblical Prophecy

2 Peter 1:20-21

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”



Intro

For thousands of years people have been fascinated with predictions of the end of the world. If we look into the inspired writings of the biblical prophets and apostles, we find many prophecies that refer to the time of the end. Should we take them seriously? Are world conditions such that the predictions could be fulfilled in our time?

Prophecy is fore-telling what is going to happen. A large percentage of the Bible (about one third) is devoted to prophecy.

You cannot study Scripture without studying prophecy.

- The coming of the Lord is a truth of such importance that it is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament (on an average of once every 25 verses).
- The only subject mentioned more frequently than the second coming is the subject of salvation.
- The Apostle Paul mentioned the communion ordinance only twice in his 13 epistles and baptism only 13 times, but he mentions the return of our Lord 50 times.

Fulfilled Prophecies

A large portion of the prophecies have already been fulfilled. The rest of it is still waiting for fulfillment. Biblical prophecies are different from other prophecies in that all of them do come to pass, and they are fulfilled exactly as foretold. It is estimated that about 75% of Biblical prophecy has been fulfilled and about 25% is yet to be fulfilled within the course of future history.

Origin of Prophecy

2 Peter 1:21 says, *“For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

There are over 2,000 phrases and clauses in the Scriptures that say, *“And God spoke”*, *“the word of God came”*, *“God said”*, etc. From this we can see that the Scriptures internally declare that it is the word of God and that it is a divinely inspired revelation from God. That’s why prophecy has its origin in God. God willed it - not humans. Humans were only prompted or carried along by God’s Spirit to speak God’s words.

Prophets were so conscious of God’s presence that the phrase: *“The Word of the Lord came to me”* frequently recurs in the Bible. A good example is found in Jeremiah 20:9 where Jeremiah laments his trials and says, *“But if I say, “I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,” then his word is in my heart like a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it.”* Jeremiah had a strong conviction that he had to speak the word of God because God put His words in him (Jeremiah 1:9). Not only Jeremiah felt this deep conviction but many others, who were moved by the Spirit of God, proclaimed and wrote the word they received from God.

The ultimate reason that Scripture is reliable and trustworthy rests upon the fact that it comes from God. He is the source of its authorship. He is the one who inspired it and willed it into existence.

God didn't leave believers to grope in the dark about the future. Not only is the Bible a book about the past but also of the present and future. God has given us a blueprint of the future.

5 Reasons Why Prophecy is Important

1. Prophecy validates the Bible.

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the best evidences that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Bible contains hundreds of fulfilled prophecies pertaining to cities, nations, empires, and individuals. No other book in the entire world has a record of this kind. The literal fulfillment of its prophecies demonstrates that biblical prophecy is accurate and substantiates the reliability of the Scriptures.

For example Isaiah prophesied that a certain king named Cyrus would allow the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple and give release to those who wished to do this work to return to their land (Isaiah 44:28-45:4) About 200 years later a Persian king named Cyrus granted permission to the Jewish captives to go and rebuild their city (fulfilled in Ezra 1:1-11, 200 years after Isaiah's time).

Daniel's prophecy concerning world powers in Daniel 2, 7 and 11 is quite impressive. Around 690 B.C. Daniel was given specific prophecy concerning four great world powers. Between 600 B.C. and the birth of Christ these world powers came into existence and were removed in the order indicated in Daniel. The four empires were Babylon, Medio-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

According to J. Barton Payne's Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy it lists 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 prophecies in the New Testament, for a total of 1,817. About 400 of those prophecies were fulfilled by Christ. Christ made it very clear that the Old Testament spoke of Him, stating: "*You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me*" (John 5:39). (Source: Associates for Biblical Research).

In regards to these prophecies theologian Dr. Charles Ryrie says, "According to the laws of chance, it would require two hundred billion earths, populated with four billion people each, to come up with one person whose life could fulfill one hundred accurate prophecies without any errors in sequence. Yet the Scriptures record not one hundred, but over three hundred prophecies that were fulfilled in Christ's first coming alone."

In regards to the 1,817 prophecies, Dr. Hugh Ross (astronomer) calculates, "Since the probability for any one of these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance averages less than one in ten (conservative figure) and since the prophecies are for the most part independent of one another, the odds for all these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance without error is less than one in 10 to 2,000 (that is 1 in 2,000 zeros written after it)!"

2. Prophecy offers hope in an age of hopelessness.

The world is experiencing discouragement and uncertainty. People are talking about the economy, politics, terrorism, the Middle East tensions, crime, drugs, and even about the climate change. Most people feel as though they have lost control of their lives and destiny. We need not be frightened by events shaping up in our world if we know Jesus as Saviour and know His promises contained in the Bible.

God has given us glimpses of the future to remind us that He is in control. God has not left us in the dark wondering what is going to happen in the future. He reveals to his people his plan. Listen folks, we know how it is going to end.

In Isaiah 46:10 he says, *“I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.”* God is in control!

We do not need to be overly alarmed or discouraged. Rather, we can have joy because we can know the outcome. We've read the last chapter, the last page. We know the outcome and we know who wins! It's good news for believers! We have hope, a living hope!

3. Prophecy reveals the person and work of Christ

There is no reason for prophecy to divert anyone's attention away from Jesus. In fact, it should serve to emphasize the centrality of Jesus. Biblical prophecies about Jesus Christ begin in Genesis with the Garden of Eden and climaxes in the last book of the Bible, with its theme "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

The Bible contains hundreds of specific prophecies concerning Jesus Christ the Messiah – some of which were made well over hundreds and even two thousand years prior to His coming. Every aspect of the life of Jesus was prophesied - the place of His birth, the nature of His birth, the quality of His ministry, the purpose of His life, and the agony of His death and his resurrection. The literal fulfillment of so many prophecies in the life of one individual transcends any mere coincidence and serves to validate that Jesus was who He said He was - the divine Son of God.

For example, it was not only prophesied that Christ would be a descendant of Abraham, (Genesis 12:1-3), but that He would be from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10) and from the house of David (Psalm 110:1); that He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:1-4); betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12f.), and also that His hands and feet would be pierced (Psalm 22:16). It is noteworthy that this prediction was made long before crucifixion was invented as a form of capital punishment by the Persians and a thousand years before it was made common by Romans.

Since all of the prophecies that have been fulfilled in the first coming of Christ were fulfilled to the finest detail, we can be sure that the Bible itself is God's revelation to humanity since no human writer could be 100% accurate.

4. The study of prophecy promotes evangelism.

Prophecy can be used as a very effective tool in evangelism, as illustrated in the story of Philip and the Eunuch (Acts 8:26ff). Philip used Isaiah's great suffering lamb passage (Isaiah 53) to teach that Jesus is the lamb who was slain for the sins of the world. As a result the eunuch accepted Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

In the years I have been in ministry I have seen people come to Christ through prophecy. One was my brother-in-law Chris who was intrigued by the accuracy of the prophecies in Scripture. Back in the early 1970's he formed a Bible study group just to study Biblical prophecy and through that group a number of people came to Christ.

5. The study of prophecy impacts lives.

The Bible is relevant in all aspects of life and for those who read it and heed it, it changes their lives. When I began the study of prophecy, I wanted to gain a better understanding of the subject.

What I eventually gained was something I never planned for - an increased feeling of urgency. I began to discover the relevancy of the Bible for current life.

One of the aspects that spoke to me powerfully was the “judgment seat of Christ.” I learned that we, as believers, will give an account for how we served the Lord and be rewarded. For some there will be a loss of reward. It is not a time of punishment where believers are judged for their sins.

2 Corinthians 5:9-10, *“So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

Conclusion

Prophecy will also motivate us to live lives consecrated and dedicated to the Lord. We need to be ready and prepared.

2 Peter 3:14, 17, 18 teaches this, *“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him...Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.”*

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- Prophecy offers hope in an age of hopelessness
- Prophecy reveals the person and work of Christ
- The study of prophecy promotes evangelism
- The study of prophecy impacts lives