

Major Themes of Prophecy

📖 2 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 1:3; 22:7, 10

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This series has dealt with Bible prophecy. Prophecy is a major component of Scripture, making up more than 30% of what God has written. As such it should be taught extensively in churches today. It is an unfortunate fact that it is rarely taught in most churches today simply because it is considered too confusing and controversial. This leaves much of the Bible untaught, thereby keeping many Christians in the dark as to the Lord's purposes. Why are these things neglected when the Lord wrote these things for us to understand? Why do they remain obscure for so many when they were designed to highlight the glory of God and His Christ? We may spend more time teaching it than is warranted, but this is to accomplish several purposes. First of which is to make up for the dearth of sound teaching concerning it. Surely the Lord would have His prophetic word taught in a desolate climate, since it is truly a spring of fresh water. Second, to instill in the believer a hope for the future that will motivate him to live more effectively in the present. What more practical truth can one glean than from prophecy? Repeatedly we are exhorted to live a certain way in the present because of what will happen in the future. Third, to give believers a greater heart for missions and evangelism. Everywhere Bible prophecy has been taught and studied, it has stimulated missions and evangelism. That is because it creates a sense of urgency to reach people with the gospel. Fourth, prophecy gives believers a greater confidence in the promises of God. When we can see that a prophecy has been fulfilled, we are more confident that other promises and prophecies in the word will also be fulfilled. This is a natural by-product of prophecy. Fifth, it stimulates a greater interest in the things of God in general. Prophecy is often a stepping stone for younger believers to getting into the deeper truths of Scripture. I would even say that prophecy is one of the first subjects that a new believer should be taught. We know that Paul taught his converts prophecy, since we have 1 and 2 Thessalonians, both written with prophetic themes. And what did it accomplish but everything that I have listed as why we spend more time teaching it than most churches. It simply gives us hope for the future, a heart for missions and evangelism, a sense of urgency and confidence in the promises of God. What so many believers are lacking would be filled by a careful study of the basics of Bible prophecy.

This series was called Major Prophetic Passages because it dealt with only the major prophecies. There are far more that we were unable to look into. Dr. Walvoord has a book called *Every Prophecy in the Bible*, where he

discusses over 1,000 prophecies. That was too much for us to take on. But what I have given you is a blueprint from the major passages that should allow you to fill in the details if you plan to go further into prophetic studies. If you would like to have this blueprint in book form, I would suggest two resources. First, the *Prophecy Study Bible*. I think it's available only in KJV and NKJV, but the notes and charts are helpful because they are geared toward explaining the prophecies of the Bible just beneath the pages of the Bible you are reading. And the outline of prophecy in these notes is very similar to what I have taught here. Second, *Charting the End Times*. This book is a visual aid to understanding Bible prophecy. If you are a visual learner, then this book is helpful because there are so many charts showing the prophetic picture. It also is very similar to what I have taught here. Having made these concluding remarks on the importance of Bible prophecy and a growing set of resources, I want to review what we have done. It was not easy deciding how this should be done, but I decided to present it as a harmony of all the passages we studied, a systematization by discussing things topically, tying all the passages together that speak to a particular subject.

Let's start with the times of the Gentiles. This phrase is used by Jesus in Luke 21:24 when he said to that generation of Israel, "they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." The expression "times of the Gentiles" refers to the time when no Davidic ruler is sitting on the throne of David. It is a time when the prevailing super-power of the world is a Gentile power. This situation began with Babylon in 586BC when the last Davidic king, Zedekiah, was deposed from the throne. The situation continued with the Medo-Persians, the Greeks and until the time of the Romans. That's when Jesus came. He had the rights to sit and rule on the throne, but because the nation Israel rejected Him as their King, He pronounced judgment on them in this verse. They would fall by the edge of the sword in the destruction of Jerusalem and be led into all the nations. Jerusalem would remain under Gentile jurisdiction until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This situation will remain until Jesus sits upon the Davidic throne to rule. Matt 25:31 says, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne." So the times of the Gentiles began in 586BC and will continue until the coming of the Son of Man. Until that time, Jerusalem and decisions concerning Jerusalem, will not be made unilaterally by Israel, but will be heavily influenced by Gentiles. We, therefore, currently live in the times of the Gentiles.

Let's move to the Church as a mystery in the plan of God. The word mystery refers to truths previously unrevealed now revealed. The Church and truths related to the church were unrevealed in the OT, but are revealed in the NT. First, the church itself was a mystery. Paul said in Eph 3:3, "by revelation there was made known to me the mystery...which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Paul's point is not that the mystery was Gentiles could be saved, that was always true. The mystery is that Gentile believers become fellow heirs and members of the body of Christ, along with Jewish believers, during this

dispensation. This equal footing between Jewish and Gentile believers was not the case during the OT. So we hold that the Church and Israel are distinct in the sense of how God is looking at and viewing them and their purposes. And that it was a mystery in the plan of God until it was revealed to Paul and other apostles in the NT times. You simply could not find any revelation about the Church in the OT. And once the mystery was revealed in the NT, we have no right to read it back into the OT. So we are in a unique time right now when there is no advantage of Jewish believers over Gentile believers, but we are all one in Christ. Second, truths related to the church were a mystery. Paul also said in 1 Cor 15:51, "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." Paul's point is that the mystery is that not all Church age believers will die before the Lord comes for them and gives them a resurrection body. So not all will die, but all will be changed. He held out for the possibility that he could be among them, saying, we will not all sleep, including himself. The point is that the Church was a mystery in the plan of God and truths related to the Church were also a mystery. This simply means they were not revealed in the OT but they have now been revealed. So it leaves room for unique prophetic truths that relate to the Church, chief among them of which is the rapture.

The third topic we'll look at will be the rapture. The rapture is simply the "catching up" of believers to the Lord in the clouds to meet Him in the air. The revelation of this doctrine was a mystery until first revealed by our Lord to His disciples in John 14 when He said He would come again and receive them to Himself so that where He is, there they would be also. In other words, it's a truth distinctly related to the Church and not Israel. Where Jesus was going was the Father's house, which is heaven, so at some unstated time He would return and take believers on earth to heaven. This was set out prospectively and more revelation was given later. In 1 Thess 4 Paul says that those who had already died in the Lord were already with Him and would return with Him when He descended in the clouds, while those still alive would be transformed into resurrection bodies to meet them in the air. And in 1 Cor 15 Paul reveals that the transformation into resurrection bodies will take place so quickly that the human eye could not detect the event. The rapture-resurrection will be the final catalyst that initiates the fulfillment of what most people call "end-times prophecy." What effect it will have on the world is not entirely clear, but it will have major effects that will be followed by a re-ordering of the world system.

The fourth topic is the regathering of Israel. The regathering of Israel was spoken of by Ezekiel in his prophecy of the dry bones. This prophecy describes two regatherings of Israel. First, a regathering in unbelief. This has been in progress since the 1800's. So here is a prophecy that we are watching be fulfilled with our very own eyes. Jews have been returning in unbelief from the dispersion for over 130 years now. So this prophecy is one that is not fulfilled, but in the process of being fulfilled. Prophecies may take a long time to be fulfilled. It took 60-70 years for the population of Jews in the land to reach 600,000. The very year the State of Israel was established in 1948, the population doubled. Today there are almost 6 million Jews that have regathered to the land. Only a very few percentage of them are believers. They are part of the Church and will be raptured when the Church is taken. But what we are witnessing now is the first regathering predicted by Ezekiel; a regathering to the land in unbelief.

The second and final regathering will be in belief. It will take place after they have been dispersed again. The next dispersion will be under the rule of the anti-Christ. He will cause this dispersion at the midpoint after he commits the abomination of desolation and sets out to destroy the Jews in the land. After Messiah returns He will regather the Jews from around the world, take them to judgment and bring the believers into the land. This is the regathering in belief. It has yet to be fulfilled, but the very fact that the regathering in unbelief has been going on for a long time now should indicate to us that we live in very important times.

The fifth topic is the anti-Christ. The anti-Christ was revealed in Daniel 7 to be a man who would rise to political power among ten other political rulers as a very arrogant man, uttering great boasts. In Dan 8 he is said to be insolent and skilled in intrigue and that he would initially befriend the Jews but later turn against them. In Dan 9 he would enter into or force a treaty on the nation Israel for seven years. It's difficult to say who he will be because Jesus said in Matt 24 that many false Christ's would come. The anti-Christ will be one among many. Even if he makes a treaty with Israel, it will be hard, if not impossible to identify him from this act, since most international treaties are signed secretly anyway. 2 Thess 2 says that his identity is being restrained by the Holy Spirit, so that even if he is alive on earth, he cannot be identified until the Holy Spirit reveals him. From these facts the chronology seems to be that the church will be raptured, then the Holy Spirit will reveal the anti-Christ, many will come along saying they are the anti-Christ, but only one will make a treaty with Israel. It is hard to tell if even this will make him known since the key text to identifying him is said to be solving a mathematical riddle. I think this is the most important text in identifying the anti-Christ. I think it indicates that he can be known after the rapture but before he signs the treaty with Israel. However, I don't know exactly what the riddle means. The text says it requires wisdom. I think only people living then will have the wisdom to solve it. It requires a calculation that possibly involves the letters of his name or possibly simply identifying him by his character as revealed in Daniel. It really is not clear whether it is the number of man, 666 or the number of a man, referring to his name, but even if it is his name, in what language, in Greek, in Hebrew, in his native language. All we can say here is that Dan 9 says he will be of Roman descent because it was the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem in AD70, even though many are arguing today that it wasn't the Romans but it was mercenaries, and through that avenue propose an Islamic anti-Christ. I don't think he will be Islamic myself. And even if he was, it says he does not regard the gods of his fathers, so he would reject Islam if he were a Muslim. But those who are wise will identify him and be opposed to him. He will make the treaty with Israel for seven years. He will keep that treaty for three and a half years. He will undergo some kind of death wound at the mid-point, but Satan will revive him and indwell him. At this time, he will exalt himself as God and sit in the temple in Jerusalem, proclaiming to be God and set up the abomination of desolation in the Temple. Rev 13 describes him setting out to destroy the believing remnant in the land of Israel and Isaiah says they will flee to Petra. It is also at the midpoint that his false prophet will require everyone to take the mark of the anti-Christ in order to buy and sell. It will be difficult times for all believers on earth. Those who seek to help these believing Jews will be putting themselves in direct opposition to the anti-Christ. If he catches them he will execute them. He will prosper for a time and then mount

his final attack against Jerusalem at the Campaign of Armageddon. Zech 14 says he will initially capture the city, destroying 2/3 of the Jews, but then the Lord will pour out His Spirit on the remaining 1/3 and they will believe in the Messiahship of Jesus and call on Him to return. They will be strengthened to re-take the city of Jerusalem and then God will divide the Mount of Olives in half, providing a way of escape for some trapped Jewish believers, then Jesus will return to Petra, render the anti-Christ and the false prophet inoperative by casting them in the lake of fire and then destroy his armies, rescue the Jewish believers and set His feet down on the Mount of Olives. The king will have come in His kingdom. So much for the anti-Christ.

Now we turn to the Tribulation, better labeled the 70th week of Daniel. This seventieth week relates to Israel. As the angel told Daniel, "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city." Since the holy people is the Jewish people and the holy city is the city of Jerusalem, then the 70th week has no relationship to the Church. That is why the Church came into existence after the sixty-ninth week and will be raptured before the seventieth week. The Church has never been on earth during any part of the 70 weeks and it never will. The six purposes of the 70 weeks are described in Dan 9:25, "to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place." Without going into all these details again, these will all be completed in connection with the Second Coming of the King in His kingdom. The beginning of the seventieth week is when the anti-Christ makes a treaty with the leadership of Israel. The week will last exactly seven years. It is divided into two halves under various time designations many times; 42 months, 1,260 days and a time, times and half a time. The first half will be geo-political peace for Israel, even though they will not enjoy geological peace. Great judgments under the seals and trumpets will be taking place, but they will have a kind of peace in their land, which is defined as freedom from attack by foreign nations. This will be because the anti-Christ will be providing military protection. The two witnesses will also be ministering in the temple area during this time, even though Jerusalem is still under Gentile control. They will be protecting those who are providing the witness of sacrifice to unbelieving Israel so that they might see Jesus in the sacrificial system and come to believe in His Messiahship. At the midpoint the anti-Christ receives the death wound, is revived by Satan who comes to indwell him, he kills the two witnesses, their bodies lie in the streets three and a half days, they are raised and ascend to heaven. The anti-Christ sets up the abomination of desolation and goes after Israel. So the second half is a time of persecution for Israel. He will try to destroy every last one of them. This causes their dispersion in preparation for the final regathering of Israel in belief. The Lord will protect those who escape in Petra. The anti-Christ will enact his economic policies requiring the mark. The 144,000 will refuse to take the mark and worship the anti-Christ, so he will kill them. As this is taking place, three angels will fly above the earth. The first one will proclaim the gospel to every human on earth. The second one will proclaim that the city Babylon the great is doomed. The third one will warn that those who take the mark so they can get food will drink of the wrath of God both in time and forever. Then the bowl judgments will begin to take place sometime in the second half. The Campaign of Armageddon will be in the final months of the second half. The armies of the world will gather

in the valley of Megiddo. They will attack Jerusalem, kill 2/3 of the Jews, all of who will be unbelievers, and conquer the city. Then the Lord will pour out His Spirit on the remaining Jews, they will believe Jesus is the Messiah, they will call on Him to be rescued. They will be strengthened to fight like David, Messiah will return and rescue them, setting His feet on the Mount of Olives.

Now for **the Second Coming**. The Second Coming is a unique day. Zech 14 says it "is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.." Matt 24 says that after the tribulation of those days there will be a complete blackout, then the sign of the coming of the Son of Man will appear, and the twelve tribes of the land will mourn over Him as He returns to rescue them. Rev 19 says that we will be with Him riding on white horses, already raptured, resurrected and rewarded. His coming will be an event which will happen very quickly. Matthew says "like lightning as it flashes from the east to the west, so will it be in the coming of the Son of Man." He will immediately render inoperative the anti-Christ and the false prophet, casting them alive into the lake of fire, and the rest of the armies will be destroyed.

Then comes events in **the 75 days**. Messiah comes in His kingdom immediately after the seven years have elapsed, but the blessings of the kingdom will not begin until 75 days later. Thus says Daniel 12, "blessed is he who attains to the 1,335 days." That's 1,335 days from the midpoint. This opens up some time for transitional issues moving from the times of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. The abomination of desolation will be taken down out of the temple during the 75 days. The surviving Jews will be regathered outside the land and a judgment for belief will take place and only those who believe will be taken into the land. Then a judgment on surviving Gentiles, known as the sheep-goats will take place, a judgment for entrance into the kingdom. The OT saints will be resurrected to go into their inheritance. The Tribulations saints who were martyred will be resurrected to go into the kingdom. A new temple will be built for the millennial kingdom period. The whole world will be renovated so that Jerusalem is the highest city on earth. Commencement of the kingdom will begin on the 1,335th day, which is 75 days after the Second Coming. We will be with Him in our resurrection bodies, so we will reign with Him for the thousand years, along with Tribulation saints who are resurrected.

We come to **the Kingdom**. The kingdom will be the time when Israel's covenants are fulfilled. The seed will reign as King, they will enjoy the land, they will be a blessing to the whole world. All blessing will come through Israel to the nations. Satan will be locked away so that he can no longer deceive the nations. It will be a time of the iron rod rule of Christ over the nations. All the nations on earth must come up annually to Jerusalem to pay homage and worship the King if they want to receive the blessing of rain on their nation. As resurrected servant kings, we will be placed in positions of rule over these nations, each of us serving in various capacities according to our reward status. Those who are mortal will have increased longevity, so that long life is the norm and death the exception. This must involve some kind of change in diet and environment. In the end it will be a greatly improved world with immortals living among mortals.

After the thousand years we come to **the final rebellion and the great white throne judgment**. Satan will be released and he will go out and deceive all the nations. Those who follow him will go up against Jerusalem and the Jewish people in the land. God will send down fire and destroy them all. The present heavens and earth will then be incinerated by fire. At that time all the unbelieving dead will be resurrected and taken to the great white throne. There Christ will judge them according to their works. Since their names are not in the book of life they will be cast into the lake of fire forever and ever.

At that time God will create **a new heaven and new earth**, an entirely new creation. The main characteristic in the heavens is there will be no sun, moon and stars. The main characteristic on earth will be there are no longer any great oceans. The greatest characteristics of all will be all memories that caused tears in the past erased, no longer any death, no suffering, no mourning, no toilsome labor, and we will dwell with God and the Lamb in a new Jerusalem forever. No unbelievers or demons will ever enter it. It is the exclusive right and premier destination of all believers. The city will be a perfect cube, 1,500 miles high, 1,500 miles wide and 1,500 miles in length. It will have twelve foundations with the names of the twelve apostles written upon them, representing the Church, and twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, representing Israel. Each gate will be made of a single remarkable pearl. Each gate will have an angel guarding the gate. The walls of the city will be 218 feet thick composed of a perfectly clear diamond like substance transmitting the glory of God and the Lamb to provide light for the entire new heaven and new earth. There will no longer be any night. The city streets and buildings will be made from completely clear gold and coming from beneath the throne of God and the Lamb will be a crystal clear waterfall cascading down to the street below and running down the middle of the street and out the gates to water the entire new earth. On each side of the river will be the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, one each month of the year. The tree will be our calendar, how we tell times and seasons in the new creation. The leaves of the tree will be for the good health and nutrition of the nations. As far as who the nations are, I suppose that they are groups of believers from every nation on earth, so that our nationality will be remembered forever. We will have access into and out of the city. The earth will be productive and the fruits of the earth will be brought into the city. We have no idea how large the new earth will be or how many people will be there, only that they are all believers from all of history. Some have assumed that there could be non-resurrected people in the new creation, and I have mentioned this as a possibility before, but I find this unlikely the more I grow in my understanding of the word. The view basically says that believers at the end of the millennial kingdom will not be given resurrection bodies because Rev 20 teaches that the first resurrection is complete before the millennial kingdom. However, Rev 20 does not teach this. Rev 20 only refers to the resurrection of Tribulation saints and it is a reference to them having the preferred resurrection, not the first, and certainly not the last resurrection of believers. We simply are not told whether millennial saints will be resurrected or not, unless 1 Cor 15 50ff is addressing them. But I find that unlikely. If believers do go over in unresurrected bodies to the new heaven and new earth, they would have to be cleansed of their sinful nature so that they were in bodies like Adam and Eve's as originally created and perfectly good. The presumption is that

these people would also be able to procreate. However, that seems highly speculative and unlikely to me being that there is absolutely no indication that people in the new heaven and new earth will have offspring. And if they were they would be born into salvation, so to speak, and that seems to be a strange situation. So, it is better to remain silent on this point rather than follow that doctrine into that and a number of other strange conclusions. The final state appears to be a place of all the redeemed from history in perfect harmony with God, and not to be envisioned according to a pattern of life in the present world. So I may have taught that before, or suggested it, but I find it less and less likely the more I study the Bible. I think all who are there will be in resurrection bodies dwelling in the closest communion with God ever known.