

# Importance of Understanding Prophecy

Although the majority of the book of Revelation does not pertain to Christians (we'll be in heaven as of 4:1), it's important that we understand what it says so we can be more knowledgeable about the signs it gives as indicators that the end of the age is approaching. Prophecy is meant to galvanize us into action. The more we know about it the more energized our faith will become, and the more urgency we'll feel to be a witness to His work in our life.

Some reason their lack of interest in Biblical prophecy on Acts 1:6-8. However, if prophecy wasn't important, why did God devote 28% of His Word to it?

- Jesus criticized the Pharisees for knowing the signs of the weather but being ignorant about the signs of the times (Matt 16:2-3)
- He commanded us to understand the prophecies of Daniel as they pertain to the End of the Age (Matt 24:15)
- Paul tells us that the end times events should not take us by surprise (1 Thess 5:1-4)
- The Lord promises a crown of righteousness to those who long for His appearing (2 Tim 4:8)
- And the Book of Revelation the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing to those who read, hear, and take it to heart (Rev 1:3)?

## Characteristics of Prophecy

- Revelation is a book of prophecy that reveals the ultimate destiny of humanity and God's kingdom.
- The events foretold in Revelation will consummate a story God has been telling since the very beginning.
- Prophecy is a major component of the Bible.
  - It should not be dismissed by any faithful Christian who desires to understand the will, plans and promises of God (2 Peter 1:19-21)
  - More than one-quarter of the Bible is prophecy...27% of the entire Bible, 28.5% of the OT, 21.5% of the NT
  - At least 737 separate prophetic topics are covered
  - 62 of 66 books foretell future events (Ruth, Song of Songs, Philemon, 3 John are only books without *explicit* prophecy)

## Traits of Prophecy

- It is designed and intended to be a prediction of future events
- It is written, published or proclaimed before the event to which it refers, and that event could not be foreseen at the time by ordinary human knowledge
- It is subsequently fulfilled in accordance with the original statement
- It does not work out its own fulfillment but stands as a witness until after the event takes place
- It is not an isolated statement, but it is often best understood when correlated with other prophecies

### **Some Tests on the Truthfulness of Prophecy**

- The ultimate test of prophecy is its fulfillment (John 14:29)

Two Passages in Deuteronomy (13:1-5, 18:18-22) offer 5 key tests for a true prophet:

1. He must be an Israelite (18:18)
2. He must pronounce his predictions in the name of the Lord (18:19)
3. He must be able to predict the near and the distant future (18:22)
4. His signs and wonders must be attributed to the power of the Lord (13:1-2)
5. His words must conform to the message or principles of previous revelation (13:2-5)

False prophets could be detected by these four ungodly characteristics (Jer 23):

1. They led immoral lifestyles (Jer 23:13-14)
2. They were crowd pleasers with their message of peace (Jer 23:16-17)
3. They failed to distinguish their own thoughts from God's revelation (Jer 23:28-29)
4. They stole God's words and plagiarized by mixing God's Word with their own (Jer 23:30,32,36)

Prophecy is the result of God the Holy Spirit giving His appointed servants authority and power to speak His words. The words of true prophets not only foretell, comfort and guide, they point to Jesus Christ (Rev 19:10).

- History is the final interpreter of prophecy, for it is when it comes to pass that we finally understand fully what it meant.
- All fulfillment vindicates Jesus Christ as God
- Fulfilled prophecy enables believers to wait for the future victory God has promised with joyful certainty
- It is because of God's perfect record of doing what He said He would do that His faithful people can wait patiently and expectantly, trusting His perfect timing to fulfill His promise of the Lord's future return

Prophecy offers God-centered confidence in the future

- Biblical Prophecy = proclamation of God's truth, His redemptive plan, and how believers fit into that plan.
- Purpose of Biblical Prophecy:
  - Bless the believer
  - Anchor the believer; provide security
  - Encourage the believer

### **Characteristics of Prophecy**

1. God is the source of all true prophecy (Is 43)
2. It comes through a prophet of God (Is 50; 2 Peter 1:21)
3. It proclaims truth about the present, the future, or both

### **Purpose of Prophecy**

- Reveals God Himself
- Shows God is sovereign, guiding history to His pre-planned conclusion
- God desires us to know Him fully
- God gets bigger when we study prophecy
- Prophecy demonstrates God's faithfulness
- Prophecy shows God's caring heart
- Prophecy is God confiding in us so we'll believe in Him; it increases our faithfulness (John 13:19; 14:29)
- Prophecy reveals God to me
- Prophecy produces faith
- Prophecy causes readiness, spiritual preparedness
- Prophecy increases our boldness in sharing...to proclaim redemption and judgment

\*\* Prophecy is God confiding in His people for their good

\*\* Prophecy proves that God is in charge of yesterday, today & tomorrow

How one views Biblical prophecy can affect in a radical way how they live the Christian life by changing the way we view NT prophecy itself, the role of Satan in the world today, the role of suffering and humiliation, the Kingdom and the Church, and whether or not apostasy is spreading.

Most Christians think that eschatology, or prophecy, is not an area in which the saints should expend significant energy in disagreement. It has often been viewed as an area of secondary importance—an intramural debate. This attitude is wise when it comes to dotting the "i"s and crossing the "t"s between systems of prophecy which have much more in common than they do differences.

It is possible that the Bible deals with prophecy more than any other subject in the Bible. "The number of prophecies in the Bible is so large," declares Walter Kaiser, "and their distribution so evenly spread through both Testaments and all types of literary forms that the interpreter is alerted to the fact that he or she is dealing with a major component of the Bible" [*Back Toward the Future: Hints for Interpreting Biblical Prophecy*, Baker, 1989:20].

Kaiser reports that J. Barton Payne calculated that 27% of the Bible deals with prophecy. Only Ruth and Song of Solomon in the OT and the tiny Epistles of Philemon and 3 John in the NT have no prophetic portions at all.

"The highest percentages of predictive material are found in the small books of Zephaniah (89 percent), Obadiah (81 percent), and Nahum (74 percent). In the New Testament, the honors go to Revelation (63 percent), Hebrews (45 percent), and 2 Peter (41 percent)." (Kaiser:21)

W. H. Griffith-Thomas has noted that one out of twelve verses in the NT deal with the Second Coming. In the Epistles, he says the Second Coming is found in one out of ten verses. Such preoccupation by God in His Word on this subject is hardly something that should be relegated to the back burner or an intramural discussion; rather, one's views on this matter will greatly impact his view of present Christian living.

### **(1) Not designed to make us prophets**

God did not give us prophecy so we could become a prophet or the son of a prophet and thereby predict the future. It is not given so we can predict who the Antichrist will be, nor is it given so we can predict the precise day and hour when the Lord will return.

From the Bible we can see the alignment of nations that will occur in the last days and we can see how our world is fitting into the pattern of those conditions morally, politically, religiously, and economically that will exist in the last days and in the days often referred to as the Tribulation or more accurately, Daniel's Seventieth Week.

From this we may take warning and encouragement from the Scripture, but we need to be careful about making predictions. It is only logical that the 'last day' conditions will undoubtedly exist or begin to fall into place before the Tribulation begins in preparation for the terrible days that lie ahead. God will obviously be placing the props on the stage of human history and putting the actors in the wings ready to come on the stage of this great drama. We may see those who possess characteristics consistent with the key players we see revealed in Scripture, but we need to be careful about making predictions.

This means that when we see such conditions developing, we can know that those days could be near, that conditions appear to be rapidly marching toward the events of the last days which could mean suffering for the body of Christ in the form of greater persecution. Though I believe in the blessed hope, the pre-tribulation rapture, the unfolding of these events in preparation for the Tribulation period also means we should take the necessary precautions and prepare as well as we can for difficult times since we could see them before the Lord returns for the church.

But we should also know that these conditions can wax and wane like the moon to some degree so we can never be sure as to the time. All we can say is that this is like what will happen or that the present world affairs are growing and shaping up as we see them in the prophetic Word.

## **(2) Prophecy demonstrates the accuracy of the Bible**

In all the writings of the world, the accuracy of biblical prophecy is unique and stands as one of the great evidences of the God-breathed nature of the Bible. The cults are basically silent on the future and when they are not, they end up with egg on their face.

Note that a false prophet's prediction might very well come to pass. The determination of whether he was a true or false prophet was not made on this basis, but on whether or not he led the people away from God. The success of false prophets was permitted in order to test God's people (Deut 13:3).

## **(3) It reveals the power and wisdom of God**

Prophecy shows how God continues to control the affairs of this world in spite of the great and constant opposition of both Satan and man to the purposes of God.

## **(4) It protects believers from Satan's counterfeits**

Understanding prophecy can also protect Christians from the counterfeit strategies of Satan and the world system that lies under his control. As an example, one of the ancient counterfeits and one that will be a key note of his last day strategies, a strategy already prominent today, is the belief in one world government which is portrayed as a utopia and the last final hope for mankind. Nationalism will be hated and internationalism praised as the answer. Another illustration is the postmillennial belief that the church will be able to bring in the kingdom by the efforts of God's people in concert, of course, with God. But an understanding of prophecy which warns of Satan's attempts to bring the world together under his last-time leader (an anti-God, anti-Christ figure) warns us not to fall for any kind of one world movement.

## **(5) It gives the believer comfort**

When we hear of wars and rumors of wars or hear of the problems of the Middle East or Russia, or we see the condition our country is in and the way it is in the control of the 'one worlders,' the knowledge of prophecy can give comfort by reminding us of God's plan and that He is still on the throne, in control, and carrying out His purposes and plans (note that the purpose of these verses is to bring comfort: John 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:18; 5:11; 2 Thess 2:2).

### **(6) It promotes holiness**

The greatest purpose of the prophetic Word, as designed by God, is the pursuit of holiness by His people. This is evident in one prophetic passage after another. Check all the passages dealing with the return of the Lord and you will find that, almost without exception, our Lord's return is used as a basis for an exhortation to godliness. This includes living as aliens in His service, living for heavenly treasure, and finding comfort in the midst of suffering and persecution through the assurance of Christ's return.

- Phil 3:15-21
- Col 3:1-5
- 1 John 2:28—3:3
- Titus 2:9-15
- 1 Peter 1:13-17

### **(7) Prophecy unfolds the loveliness of Jesus**

Rev 19:10 - And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Prophecy is designed to reveal truth concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus. This is nowhere more evident than in the book of Revelation.

## **Dangers of Prophecy**

### **(1) Sensationalism**

Acts 17:21

2 Tim 4:3

Prophecy was not meant to be sensationalized. It was meant to instruct believers according to certain clear-cut purposes of the Word that we have studied. Prophecy is fascinating and can be exhilarating, but should we be any more interested in it than in any other major tenet of Scripture? No.

Of course we should look expectantly for the return of the Lord and the blessed hope, but we need all of Scripture to do that effectively. Furthermore, reality reminds us that 2000

years have passed since the promise of His coming. This does not minimize the certainty of His return, but it should provide us with balance so that we live and anticipate His coming as though He will return today, yet work and serve as though He will not come for another 1,000 years!

## **(2) Pride**

In 1 Corinthians the Apostle reminds us that knowledge without love makes us arrogant (2 Cor 8:1) and pride is, of course, a danger we all face in some area of our lives. But, for some reason, people tend to become more puffed up over their knowledge of prophetic truth than in other areas.

Prophecy is a complicated area of Scripture with many divergent viewpoints even within the same prophetic scheme of things. As a result, people often view the knowledge of prophecy as a sign of maturity, great intelligence, or spiritual insight. The tendency is to think that if someone knows a lot about prophecy, that person is something close to the incarnation of the Apostle Paul.

## **(3) Imbalance**

Imbalance is a problem in any area of life. One of the unique things about the Lord Jesus is the fact of His balance. The Apostle John described Him as One who was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He was and is perfectly balanced. But what happens to us? We tend to become overly occupied with one area of doctrine or truth to the exclusion of others. We find a 'hobby horse' and ride it to death. This is especially true with the study of prophecy, especially from the standpoint of coming events and world affairs.

## **(4) Discouragement**

If you are new at the study of prophecy, don't become discouraged if at first the study of prophecy seems like a large puzzle. Keep in mind the purposes of prophecy. In time, it will begin to fit together as you pick up the pieces one by one, but never expect to have all the answers to all the questions.

### **What Good Is Bible Prophecy? by Dr. Paul Benware**

In the middle of a conversation about his church and his ministry, a pastor shared with me that he thought that Bible prophecy was not all that relevant to the present day needs of his people and so he stayed away from it in his preaching. He went on to explain that biblical prophecy tends to be "sensational" and, when all is said and done, to be quite confusing to people.

This pastor was one that seemed to have a high view of the scriptures and one that sincerely wanted his people to mature in their walk with Christ. From our conversation it

was clear that he wanted his people to be helped in their struggle with the world, flesh and the devil. With that in mind I asked him if he had thought about how Christ and the Apostles employed biblical prophecy in helping believers grow spiritually, suggesting that Jesus and the NT writers sprinkled future events liberally in their teaching. Bible prophecy was used by them to change the way people thought and lived; that the basic purpose of prophecy is to change the way we all live in the present. To his credit, he indicated that he really needed to rethink his view of biblical prophecy.

Unfortunately, many Christians whether they are in the church or the academic community, believe that biblical prophecy is not very important. They reason that it is too controversial, too unclear or much too irrelevant for life in the present. However, this attitude would come as a real surprise to the early church. For example, when the Apostle Peter wrote his two letters (which are not seen as prophetic epistles), he spoke some 25 times about future events. The writers of the NT understood that prophecy was designed to shape the way we view life right now by influencing our choices and priorities.

Here are some of those truths that show us the great value of biblical prophecy and why the prophetic element is found interwoven everywhere in the Bible. Biblical prophecy is not only "relevant" to our lives today but it provides a biblical mindset found in those who pleased God. (See Heb 11:9-16).

**(1) Biblical prophecy understood and embraced gives needed help in our struggle against sin.**

Serious believers are very aware of the "sin that so easily entangles us" (Heb 12:1) and wish for victory over sin. When we keep future events fresh in our thinking, that we are going to see Christ and appear before His judgment seat, we are apt to not allow sin to take up residence in our lives. We can say "no" to sin much easier. This was the point the Apostle John made.

*And now little children abide in Him (keep in fellowship), so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming...And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. — 1 John 2:28; 3:3*

It is when we cease thinking that Jesus could appear at any moment and bring to pass the end times as described in the Bible, that we get careless in the way we live. Remember Jesus' powerful statement that it is the evil slave who says "my Lord delays his coming" (Matt 24:48). The believer's struggle against sin will never stop in this life, but that believer is fortified in the inner person by the truths of what may soon take place.

**(2) Biblical prophecy provides a framework for the believer to prioritize life better and to make better decisions.**

If we knew that the ABC company was going to go out of business in six months we likely wouldn't take a job with them. Bob and Mary would probably not have bought an old house and spent the last year remodeling it, if they had known it was going to burn to the ground the day after they finished their project. Bible prophecy can play such a life changing role today.

When believers become convinced of the truthfulness of these prophetic portions dealing with our accountability and reward and end time events, they will prioritize life differently. They most likely will make better decisions and order their lives in a much more biblical way. The reality of future things sheds significant light on the important issues of life and gives us a framework for evaluating what is most important. Those who live with an awareness of what lies ahead in the plan of God think differently regarding the use of their time, money and resources. The goals and purposes of life are altered by a conviction about future realities.

Again, note the Apostle Peter's exhortation when he says "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" in view of future events (2 Peter 3:11). Understanding and believing what biblical prophecy declares makes an impact on the way we do life now. The Apostle Paul made it clear (as in 1 Cor 9) that he said "no" to himself and ordered his life differently than many others because he had an eye on the glory that was ahead for believers.

### **(3) Biblical prophecy provides a valuable mindset in times of trial and temptation**

The fact that believers are faced with some burdensome and painful trials in this life is not a new revelation. We know that God has not exempted believers from the sudden death of a loved one or the arrival of a debilitating disease or the appearance of great financial loss. And even if such "major tragedies" do not enter the believer's life, the child of God still experiences scores of "minor" pressures, griefs, disappointments and setbacks.

James, and others, observed that believers can respond well or they can respond poorly to these painful times in life. In order for trials to be successfully endured, James says that the believer must possess God's wisdom, which is seeing life from God's perspective. An integral part of God's perspective is the future that lies ahead. This is how Jesus faced the trial of His crucifixion. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus "for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb 12:2). Jesus looked beyond those six hours on the cross to that time in His glorious kingdom when He would be with those that He would redeem and restore.

The believer who is focused on this world will likely not do well in trials when things go terribly wrong in this world. Without a working knowledge of things to come, he will have to fall back on the "stiff upper lip" approach or to wishful thinking. The truth is that our best life is not now. But the believer who anticipates the glorious age to come will be better

positioned to deal well with the pain and disappointments that accompany trials in this world.

After speaking about the universality of trials and the need for God's wisdom, James references the future (James 1:12). The "crown of life" also mentioned in Rev 2:10, does seem to focus on the future reward given to the believer who loves the Lord so much that he does not resent what the Lord has allowed into his life. An incentive for enduring in trials is the understanding that there is future reward for the enduring believer.

James 1:12: Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

As James' letter comes to a close, it returns to the matter of the trials of life and the need to patiently endure like Job and the prophets of old. And here James again appeals to the future to give strength to his friends.

James 5:7-9:

7 Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord....

8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

What believers need in times of trial and difficulty is not positive thinking, but prophetic thinking!

#### **(4) Biblical prophecy provides hope which is a key element in establishing a Biblical worldview**

If there is anyone who ought to live in this world with confidence, it is the child of God (Cf. Titus 2:13). If there is anyone who ought not live under the load of defeat, fear and depression, it is the child of God. While none of us are exempt from painful situations in life, we should not live hopeless, negative, defeated lives because we understand where all of life is headed and that we have an amazing future that is ours as believers. "Let us rejoice and be glad" (Rev 19:7) will be the prevailing sentiment for the redeemed.

This attitude of hope is not wishful thinking because it is grounded in the commitment of God to restore what was lost in the Garden of Eden. Man's willful disobedience brought about the loss of paradise, of fellowship with God, and of the privileged position of ruling the earth. When Adam and Eve sinned, God could have wiped everything out and started over again. (After all, what would He have lost but two people and six days of work!). But instead He promised that there would be restoration and reconciliation through the "seed

of the woman." And at that time He embarked on the path that would bring about the restoration of all things that had been lost.

When we turn to Rev 20-22 we discover that those three things that were lost will be fully regained because of the Cross and the powerful working of our Creator God. Unhindered fellowship with God, a wonderful paradise and the opportunity of ruling with Messiah will again be the experience of people. Biblical prophecy lets us in on this marvelous ending and gives us the confident expectation which assists us in living well for Christ right now. Biblical prophecy provides us with a clear, comprehensive worldview which in turn generates biblical hope because we are dealing with a God who is faithful to His promises.

#### **(5) Biblical prophecy reveals the end of evil and the unbeliever**

The problem of the presence and apparent success of evil has been a thorny theological and philosophical problem for all of man's history. Biblical prophecy does not deal with the origin of evil but it does deal with the end of evil. Wickedness will not prevail and evil people will be punished and will not "get away with murder." It is clear that evil and evildoers will be removed from life that will be lived forever in God's forever kingdom.

2 Peter 3:13: But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Rev 21:27: ...and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those who names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Rev 20:11: And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

As the Scriptures describe the fate of the unbeliever, it is a terrible fate that they face. As we contemplate the eternal end of the unbeliever, it is not good that we become satisfied with our own wonderful futures but that we are motivated by biblical prophecy to share the good news with those who future is horrible.

Matt 25:41,46:

**41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you accursed people, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;**

**46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."**

The Apostle Paul graphically adds to this statement by Jesus.

2 Thess 1:7-9:

7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted, *along with us*, when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels

8 in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God, and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

9 These people will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Paul's prophetic word on the fate of unbelievers is terrifying. They not only will be sent into eternal fire, but their lives will be ruined eternally ("eternal destruction"). It is the opposite of that quality of life known commonly as "eternal life." This one passage removes the ridiculous suggestion that anyone will have a good time partying in hell or any other such nonsense. That which God designed life to be and have by way of meaning and purpose will be gone forever.

It will be like being eternally depressed, where forever life has no meaning to it. And furthermore, they will be "away from the presence of the Lord." Today even the wicked are recipients of God's common grace and are therefore blessed. But in the lake of fire, there appears to be a complete separation from any of God's grace and mercy. Can anything be more terrible than what Paul describes in these verses? These forceful statements about the fate of the unbeliever ought to resonate in the hearts of believers causing us to be more compassionate and more active in giving out the good news.

Believers who are armed with this prophetic knowledge will be encouraged by the demise of evil, even as it appears on the daily news that evil is winning the day. In the world to come it is righteousness that reigns.

#### **(6) Prophecy contributes an important reminder of God's absolute sovereignty**

The prophet Isaiah powerfully declared that God is sovereign over all men and nations (Isaiah 40). No person, no nation or combination of nations can for one second thwart the plans and purposes of God. And while we might be impressed or even intimidated by the authority of those in Washington DC, Moscow, Berlin or Tehran, God is not. Bible prophecy reveals that our sovereign God will bring to pass everything that He said He would do. He is sovereign. And biblical prophecy reinforces that significant reality.

So, again, has biblical prophecy an important place in the life and thinking of the believer? Perhaps the average believer, whether in the pew or the halls of the academy, need to give serious reflection to the Word of God on the strategic role of prophecy in our theology and our living.

#### **The Best Reason to Study Prophecy (Kelley)**

Is 46:10 - 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.

Here's a question I'm often asked and it's a good one. If we believe the Rapture will take us away before all the End Times events occur, then why do we need to study prophecy? There are several good answers to this question. One of the clearest comes from the Olivet Discourse, specifically Matt 24:15-16: "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." Even though the Lord was speaking primarily to Israel here, He directed everyone who reads Matthew's gospel to understand Dan 9:24-27, a prophecy given to Israel, and the key to understanding End Times prophecy.

Another good reason is that Paul's letters to the Thessalonians are chock full of End Times prophecy. Every chapter of both letters contains a reference to the 2nd Coming for an average of one every 13 verses. Paul went to such lengths even though it's pretty clear he had taught them that the Rapture would take place before the Antichrist is revealed. If the Bible really is the inspired Word of God, why did He have Paul describe events on Earth after the rapture if He didn't think we needed to know them?

And then there's the Book of Revelation. John shows the Rapture occurring in Rev 4 but then goes on for another 15 chapters, mostly describing conditions on Earth, before re-introducing the Church in Rev 19. Same question. Why describe events on Earth after the rapture if He didn't think we needed to know them?

Some say it's so those left behind at the Rapture can read Revelation and the Thessalonian letters and find out what's going on to help them endure the End Times. That may be OK for the middle of Revelation, but John's book begins and ends with the Church in view, and the Thessalonian letters were written specifically to the Church. For some reason, we're supposed to know how End Times events unfold.

And Here's The Best One

And that leads me to what I think is the biggest reason:

Isaiah 44:6-8 -

6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Here is the two-part test for anyone who would be God. Part one: Accurately recall every event of the past. Part two: Accurately predict every event of the future. Of all the so-called

holy writings, only the Bible answers this challenge. Other "gods" require that you take them at face value, offering neither evidence of their existence, nor proof of their trustworthiness. But ours says, "I'll prove that I'm real and that you should trust me." He tells us our past (sometimes as personally as Jesus did with the woman at the well in John 4:17-18) and gives us detail about the future that only someone who has already seen it can know. "I make known the end from the beginning," He proclaims, "From ancient times, what is still to come." (Is 46:10) He's chosen this way to authenticate Himself to us because He's the only One who can do it and be right every time.

This is so we need never be in the position of having zeal without knowledge, (Prov 19:2) believing passionately but unable to defend our position. When we share the Gospel with someone, and they respond with, "That's just something you believe," it's good to be able to justify our beliefs with a summary of God's 4000-year track record for truth-telling (the Old Testament) and to explain that someone who's been that truthful about the past is likely to also be truthful about the future (the New Testament).

Did you know that if you were to devote just one hour each day to the study of any subject that interests you, within 5 years you could be one of the world's leading experts on that subject?

Throughout the 4,000 years of the OT God had maintained a perfect record of predicting the future to Israel. No matter what set of standards you apply, statistical analysis, rules of evidence, forensic science or whatever, you'll find that this could not have happened by chance. It could only have been done by someone who can see the end from the beginning, an ability unique to God.

#### If What You Believe Doesn't Result In Action...

The history of Israel is replete with events first predicted and then performed with faultless accuracy. And when it came to the Messiah, over 300 specific prophecies, given over a span of several thousand years, were fulfilled in detail within one generation, the one in which He lived.

No rush of emotion for me, no gushing of tears while I stumbled blindly down the sawdust trail as a choir sang "Just as I am," but a dead certainty that God has to be Who He says He is, He has to have done what He said He did, and the Bible has to be His inerrant Word. I called it a rush of logic, but the certainty I felt drove me every bit as humbly to the foot of the cross as a teary eyed confession would have, and yet it gave me a staying power that's often missing in more emotional conversions. I knew what I believed and why I believed it and could explain it clearly to anyone who cared to listen.

As often happens to people who undertake a serious study of prophecy, I concluded that if the 25-30% of the Bible that's prophecy can be trusted then the rest of it can be trusted as well, so I began studying it too. I discovered that God made a whole bunch of promises to

us, such as His promises to see us through the tough times we can now see coming, and to take us to be with Him before He judges the world. These promises have more meaning because they're backed up by His proven track record in prophecy.

If you're not every bit as certain as I am about God, then try a study in prophecy. I bet it will galvanize you into action just as it did me, especially as you begin to understand how little time is left.



## J. Dwight Pentecost

*Prophecy for Today, Page 20*

**“A short time ago, I took occasion to go through the New Testament to mark each reference to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and to observe the use made of that teaching about His coming. I was struck anew with the fact that almost without exception, when the coming of Christ is mentioned in the New Testament, it is followed by an exhortation to godliness and holy living.”**