

JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY
WEEK 6 – Prophecy 101

Isaiah 46:10 – God knows the end from the beginning.

Prophecy doesn't happen in a vacuum. . . . Prophecy isn't just relegated to the book of Daniel and Revelation. Mark Hitchcock in his book, "The Complete Book of Bible Prophecy," comments about how much of the Bible is prophetic – 27%; 20% of the books in the Bible are prophetic books – they look forward to end times. Prophecy is part of THE STORY! What does that look like? How can I explain that? Before we get into particulars – with your questions – I'm going to give you the BIG PICTURE – which is the MOST IMPORTANT part of prophecy!

The Gospel of Matthew is a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. Matthew wrote to the Jewish people. The Gospel of Matthew does not begin a new story! Matthew deals primarily with the life of Jesus the Messiah as fulfilling OT prophecies relating to the coming King. Matthew's purpose was to demonstrate that Jesus the Messiah is the promised Messiah of the OT, that He fulfilled the requirements of being the promised King Who would be a descendant of David, and that His life and ministry fully supported the conclusion that He is the prophesied Messiah of Israel.

In the book of Matthew, written in approx. 50 AD, the Jewish people were reminded that Jesus came and traveled all about Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:23) and told His people, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). What does that mean? God promised the Jewish people a physical, literal, material kingdom on earth – the Millennial Kingdom where the Messiah would reign for 1,000 years from Jerusalem seated on King David's throne (II Sam. 7:12-16). The Davidic Covenant comes directly out of the Abrahamic Covenant. God had promised the descendants of Abraham land, a seed (descendants and THE Seed – Jesus – the Messiah Who would rule and reign), and a blessing (salvation – for Jews and Gentiles).

At Jesus' first coming, He told the Jewish people "Here I am – I am the Messiah Who will be the King of the Kingdom God has promised to you." In Isaiah 35 we read of miracles that the Messiah would perform in the Millennial Kingdom. In fact, in Matt. 4:23 where it states that Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, the passage goes on to say, ". . . AND He healed all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people." Matthew 4:23 tells us that along with preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and telling them to repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, Jesus performed miracles. These miracles had something to do with the Kingdom that God had promised to the Jewish people. We see a specific purpose re: Jesus' miracles. Were His miracles merely to show compassion? More than showing great mercy for the people, Jesus demonstrated through His miracles that He is the Messiah. Jesus' miracles proved His Messiahship. Jesus performed miracles that were prophesied in Isa. 35. Isaiah 35 tells us that when God comes to set up His kingdom, "*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing.*" (Isa. 35:5-6). This is the Messiah the Jewish people were looking for.

Jesus' miracles proved He is the Messiah – the Messiah Who would come and set up the Kingdom of God.

In Matthew 10:5-8 we read that Jesus sent out His disciples and told them to go only to the Jews: *“Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead,^[c] cast out demons.”*

In Matthew 10:1 – *“And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.”*

Cleanse the lepers – (Messianic miracles); cast out demons (Satan will be bound). The Kingdom was being offered to the Jews!! BUT, the Messiah had to come first as the Suffering Servant. He had to fulfill the role of the Suffering Servant and die for sin. Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Why did He have to come first as the Suffering Servant? This was God's plan of redemption. Sin had to be dealt with – it had to be judged – the price for sin had to be paid – the penalty needed to be paid - there needed to be a ransom price. Jesus had to REDEEM us – buy us out of slavery to sin. AND, Jesus' Suffering Servant role was prophesied.

Of course, we know that Jesus didn't set up His kingdom for the Jewish people at the first coming. Matthew, in his Gospel, then explains why the prophecies relating to the Kingdom of God on earth were delayed in being fulfilled until the Second Coming. The Jewish people – as a NATION – did not come to faith in Jesus. A remnant believed in Him. But God had told the NATION to repent! They had to repent as a NATION to receive the Kingdom of God on earth.

When we read about end times in the OT for the Jewish people, we read about the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom. The Tribulation is the Time of Jacob's Trouble when God will purge Israel. The Millennial Kingdom is the Kingdom God promised Israel – when the Messiah, Jesus, will reign for 1,000 years from King David's throne in Jerusalem. Gentile believers will be residing in the Millennial Kingdom as well – and ruling and reigning with Jesus II Tim. 2:12 – *“If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.”*

When we read about end times in the NT for the Church, we read about Apostasy within the Church! That's some difference, isn't it? Is the Church looking forward to the Millennial Kingdom? YES! We will be in the Millennial Kingdom. But the main thrust in the NT re: last days is the apostasy that will occur in the Church prior to the Millennial Kingdom. What do you gather from that?

END TIMES TERMS

We must distinguish between the last days of the Church age and the last days of Israel's Tribulation.

ISRAEL

“latter days”

- Deut. 4:30; 31:29; Jer. 30:24; 48:47; Dan. 2:28; 10:14

“last days”

- Isa. 2:2; Jer. 23:20; 49:39; Eze. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Micah 4:1; Acts 2:17

“last day”

- John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48

“latter years”

- Eze. 38:8

“time of the end”

- Dan. 8:13-17

“end of time”

- Dan. 12:1-2, 4

“end time”

- Dan. 12:9

“end of the age”

- Dan. 12:13; Matt. 24:3-31

CHURCH

(NT – “last days” – Acts 2:12; Heb. 1:2; I Peter 1:20; I John 2:18)

“later times”

- I Timothy 4:1

“last days”

- II Tim. 3:1-7; Heb. 1:2; James 5:3; II Pet. 3:3

“last times”

- I Pet. 1:20

“last time”

- I Pet. 1:5; Jude 18

“last hour”

- I John 2:18

Conclusion re: “end times” terms: God has a plan for Israel that is separate and apart from God’s plan for the Church! The verses in the OT re: end times include passages concerning the Tribulation (“The Time of Jacob’s Trouble – Jer. 30:7). The verses in the NT re: end times address apostasy. The New Testament does not prepare Church Age believers to go through the Tribulation!

How should we understand the Bible?

Consistent literal interpretation is essential to properly understand what God is saying in the Bible.

When the plain sense of the Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense.

Literal interpretation involves an approach based on the actual words in their ORDINARY meaning – NOT GOING BEYOND THE FACTS.

Whenever we come to a passage (non-prophetic or prophetic), our commitment must be to understand that passage according to the accepted laws of language and not to seek some mystical or figurative interpretation. A spiritual or allegorical approach treats the literal sense as secondary to a deeper, more spiritual meaning.

However, in our speech, we do throw in figures of speech, i.e. One might say of a person "He kicked the bucket." It is understood, however, what is meant by that phrase. One might say of their schedule, "I've got a million things to do."

What determines the interpretation? The context! Within Bible study CONTEXT is key!!

AND REMEMBER - current events must never be the means of interpreting the Scriptures. Rather the Scriptures must interpret current events.

Are we living in the last days? Yes!

- Acts 2: 14ff – Peter, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, reckons the events of Pentecost with Joel 2:28ff and considers this time – the last days.
- Hebrews 1:1-2 – “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

The stage for the fulfillment of the prophecies of the end times is being set:

- We are seeing a global emphasis. The way has been paved for a world economy and a world government.
- Religious beliefs are being watered down so that they are more palatable to the general public. Tolerance is the cry today.
- The spiritual vacuum that results from the emphasis on materialism and self-focus is preparing the world for the ultimate deception: the antichrist.
- The antichrist, a charismatic world leader, will arise on the international scene promising to bring peace and economic stability. He will eventually control the world.
- A crisis in the Middle East will trigger this world leader’s intervention. He will sign a peace treaty with Israel only to break it in the future.

- A false prophet will suddenly emerge to gain control of the world religious system. The false prophet will reinforce the worship of the antichrist.
- The antichrist will break his covenant with Israel. Results: extreme persecution of Israel and Tribulation saints (Rev. 12:13-17).
- All nations will come against Israel during the battle of Armageddon.

How close are we to the end? Only God knows!

THE RAPTURE AND THE SECOND COMING

Enormous controversy is brewing among professing Christians today as to whether or not there is going to be a Rapture of the Church. II Peter 3:3-4 – scoffers in the last days saying where is the promise of His coming? There is much controversy and false teaching surrounding this event. The Bible refers to the return of Jesus about three times as much as it does to His first coming. Therefore, there is stronger support for the fact that Jesus is coming back.

Definition of terms:

Rapture – removal of the Church from the earth when Church age believers will meet the Lord in the air.

Timing of the Rapture:

Pre-Trib – the Church will be removed before the Tribulation.

Mid-Trib – the Church will be removed in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation.

Pre-Wrath – the Church will be removed prior to what they deem as God's wrath being poured out on the world (approx. ¾'s of the way through the Tribulation).

Post-Trib – the Rapture will take place at the end of the tribulation. The Church will be lifted to the Lord and return with Him. The Post-Trib view sees the Rapture and the physical return of the Lord as one event: the Church will be caught up to meet the Lord as He descends from heaven. They believe there is only one coming of the Lord - at the end of the tribulation.

Physical Second Coming – occurs at the end of the tribulation when Christ returns to the earth to begin His 1,000 year kingdom. Zechariah 14:4 – Jesus' feet will stand on the Mount of Olives when He physically returns to establish His Kingdom on earth. The physical Second Coming of Jesus is not the Rapture of the Church. The OT teaches the physical Second Coming of the Messiah. While there are types of the Rapture in the OT (Enoch, Noah's ark, Elijah), the Rapture is a mystery not revealed in the OT. I Corinthians 15:51-52 – *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* "Mystery" – a truth hidden up to this point (i.e. when mentioned in the NT) but now revealed.

Millennium – 1,000 year reign of Jesus.

Pre-Millennial Viewpoint – believes that Jesus will return physically prior to the 1,000 year reign. Jesus will establish His kingdom.

Post-Millennial Viewpoint – believes that Jesus will return after the Church has established the kingdom on this earth – after the Church has Christianized the world. Jesus does not establish His kingdom on earth.

Amillennial Viewpoint – believes that there will be no literal 1,000 year reign of Jesus. Amillennialists believe that Jesus is currently sitting on the throne of David and that this present Church age is the kingdom over which Jesus reigns.

There are 3 key NT passages that give us information on the Rapture:

John 14:2-3 – the setting: Jesus and Disciples gathered in the upper room before the crucifixion.

- Jesus explained why He was leaving to go to heaven (one of the reasons). He was going to be preparing dwelling places to which He could bring His believers in the future.
- Jesus is talking about a future coming.
- Jesus states the purpose – “I will come again and receive you unto Myself, so that where I am there you may be also.” It’s NOT the reverse – that Jesus would be on the earth with His believers. The purpose of Jesus’ coming in John 14 is so that His believers can be where He is – in the Father’s house in heaven.
- There is no mention of judgment.
- This passage is quite different from Rev. 19:11-15.

I Corinthians 15:51ff

- “I show you a mystery” – a body of knowledge that was completely hidden in the OT which is now revealed. This is a new revelation.
- “We shall not all sleep” – “sleep” is a metaphor for death. There will be Christians alive on earth when Jesus comes to rapture the Church. Those on earth will be transformed instantly from mortal to immortal when the Rapture takes place. Believers who died before the Rapture – their bodies will be resurrected from the dead.
- Within this passage, the change in the physical bodies of believers at the Rapture is emphasized.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

- “I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep (died) lest you sorrow as others who have no hope” – v. 13
- On Paul’s 2nd missionary journey, he traveled to Thessalonica (Acts 16:1-18:22) and dialogued with them from the OT re: Jesus’ death and resurrection in order to prove that Jesus is truly the promised Messiah (Acts 17:2-3).
- The people of Thessalonica had come to believe in and hope for the reality of Jesus’ return (I Thess. 1:3, 9, 10; 2:19; 5:1,2; II Thess. 2:1, 5). They were living in expectation of that coming, eagerly awaiting Jesus

- Verse 13 indicates that they were agitated about some things that were happening to them that might affect their participation in His return. They knew Jesus' return was the climactic event and didn't want to miss it. The major question – “what happens to the Christians who die before He comes? Do they miss His return?” Clearly they had an imminent view of Jesus' return. They believed His return could happen in their lifetime. Their confusion came as they were being persecuted – an experience from which they thought they were going to be delivered by the Lord's return (I Thess. 3:3-4).
- “Sleep” in v. 13 – “those who have fallen asleep”. Sleep is a familiar NT euphemism for death which describes the appearance of the deceased. It describes the body, not the soul (II Cor. 5:1-9; Phil. 1:23). Sleep is used of Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:24) whom Jesus raised from the dead. It also is said of Stephen who was stoned to death (Acts 7:60), of Lazarus (John 11:11), and of others (I Cor. 15:6, 18, 51; II Peter 3:4).
- Those who sleep in v. 13 are identified as “the dead in Christ” in v. 16.
 - I Cor. 12:13 – baptized into the body of Christ when we're born again.
 - “In Christ” – NOT OT saints.
 - Daniel 12:1-2 – OT saints will be resurrection after the Tribulation.
 - Salvation in the OT – same – through grace by faith in God's revealed messaged. Salvation in the OT is not described, however, as being “in Christ.” (Psalm 51; Ruth 2:12; Isaiah 55).
- “Caught up” together with the dead in Christ – in the clouds – to meet the Lord in the air.
- Verse 18 – comfort!!!
- Jesus' physical Second Coming is spoken of as the Day of the Lord and relates to judgment!

“Rapture”

- Concept of the Rapture in the NT. The word, “Rapture,” is not in Scripture. (Remember, the word “Trinity” is not in Scripture either. This doesn't mean that there is no tri-unity of God. Scripture teaches the tri-unity of the Godhead. Scripture teaches the catching up of the Church – the Rapture.)
- The Greek word, harpazo (har-pad-zo) means to seize, carry off by force; to snatch out or away. Within the Latin Vulgate – “raptizo” – to snatch up or to catch up.

A careful study of all Biblical references to the Second Coming clearly shows that the Rapture and the physical return of Jesus to the earth are two separate phases of His Second Coming.

RAPTURE

Christ comes in the air
(I Thess. 4:17)

PHYSICAL 2ND COMING

Christ comes to earth
(Zech. 14:4)

He comes for His saints
(I Thess. 4:16-17)

The Rapture is a mystery,
i.e. a truth unknown in the OT
(I Cor. 15:51)

The Rapture is a time of blessing
(I Thess. 4:18)

Those taken are taken for blessing
(I Thess. 4:13-18); those left are left
for judgment (I Thess. 5:1-3)

The Rapture is for the Church
(I Cor. 15:51-58; I Thess. 4:13-18)

All Christians are translated
into new bodies (I Cor. 15:51-53)

Christians are taken to the
Father's house (Jn. 14:1-3)

The Church will be in heaven
(Jn. 14:1-3)

It could occur at any moment
(I Cor. 15:52)

There are no signs preceding it
(I Cor. 15:52)

It occurs before the day of wrath
(I Thess. 5:1-10)

He comes with His saints
(Jude 14; Rev. 19:14)

The Second Coming events
are not a mystery; they are
the subject of many OT prophecies
(Psa. 72; Isa. 11; Zech. 14)

The main emphasis of the
Second Coming is judgment (Isa.
61:2; Matt. 3:11-12)

Those taken are taken for
judgment. Those left are
left for blessing (Matt. 24:37-41)

The Second Coming
involves Israel primarily and also the
Gentile nations (Matt. 24:1-Matt.
25:46)

There is no translation of
bodies

Resurrected saints remain
on earth (Matt. 24:37-41)

Christ sets up His kingdom
on earth (Zech. 14:4, 16; Isa. 2:2-4;
Psa. 2)

It cannot occur until the end
of the seven-year Tribulation period
(Zech. 12:10ff; Zech. 14)

There are numerous signs
preceding it (Matt. 24)

It occurs after the
Tribulation (Matt. 24:29-31)

There is no mention of Satan

Satan is bound in the abyss for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3)

There is the marriage of the Lamb
(Rev. 19:7-10)

His bride descends w/ Him
to earth (Rev. 19:11-14)

Only Christ's own will see Him
(Jn. 14; I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4)

Every eye will see Him
(Matt. 24:30)

QUESTIONS:

What is new to you?

What do you believe?

What are your concerns?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Come up with your belief about end times based on the Scripture

Chart out your belief and note Scripture references