

THE PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES:
What Lies Before Us?
Message 1

INTRO: In the next while we want to focus our attention on the prophetic Scriptures and answer the question: What lies before us? I cannot resist telling you a little story to begin this series, although some of you will have heard me tell it before. I was teaching Sunday School in the Baptist church we were attending in Quesnel, B.C. It was not my topic, but during the course of the class I made some mention of prophetic matters. After the class someone tapped my on the shoulder and said, "Wow, did you ever open a can of worms this morning, eh?" I discovered that he was referring to the fact that I had opened the topic of Bible prophecy. In his understanding, discussing prophecy was like opening a can of worms. To him, and many others, discussing prophecy is something like discussing politics. Well, I said to him, "No sir. Prophecy, is not a can of worms. It is our view of it that is the can of worms."

It is true that prophecy can be a very confusing study. It is true that it takes a lot of mental activity to try to put the biblical data together. That is also why we have pastors and teachers. Recently I was reading in the Seventh Day Adventist book, *7 Mysteries Solved*. Five of those seven have to do with what we call eschatology, or end time matters. And when I read the material, I can see how someone not familiar with these truths could either become very confused, or be taken in by false teaching that sounds logical.

In spite of all the confusion that exists, prophecy is one of the most beautiful topics in all the Bible. Nowhere in all the world or in any religion will you find a prophetic book like the Bible. Prophecy is one of those matters that proves that the Bible is the Word of God. There is NO POSSIBLE way that anyone but God could have prophesied the events prophesied in this book. No one but God could have known the events that were recorded in the Word of God, sometimes several thousand years before they happened. Prophecy is one of the strong evidences that the Bible is in fact the Word of God.

And with that brief introduction, we give ourselves to the Biblical doctrine of prophecy. Now in this series I plan to cover two main points. First we will look at a number of

preliminary things we need to understand, and then we will look at the most important prophetic events yet to happen.

I. IMPORTANT PRELIMINARY ITEMS

A. The Definition of Prophecy

So, let us take a moment to define the term *prophecy*. Our English word *prophecy* is the translation of the Greek word *propheteia*. This word comes from two words. The first is *pro*, a preposition usually meaning *before*. The second word is *phemi*, meaning to speak. So it means to make events known by speech before they happen. Prophecy is to make events known before they happen.

There is another aspect to prophecy, and this aspect is of no little importance, but it is little understood. Vine's Dictionary says the preposition *pro* in prophecy means *forth* here, thus prophecy is to speak forth. The NT clearly defines certain uses of the word prophecy in this way (1 Cor. 14:3). So there are two uses of the word prophecy. Someone has described them like this: one forth-telling and the other foretelling. The prophets of the Bible did both kinds of prophecy.

In our series, we are going to be looking at the foretelling aspect of prophecy. We are going to look at events that have been foretold in the Bible, but have not yet happened.

B. The Importance of Studying Prophecy

Over the years I have had a number of people say to me, "Oh, Bible prophecy is all so confusing. I have concluded that it doesn't matter what I believe with regard to prophecy, as long as I'm ready to go when Jesus comes." From that statement I want to raise this question: Does it matter if I do not understand Bible prophecy? Or, does God want Christians to study prophecy? Does God hold Christians responsible to understand prophecy?

So I invite you to turn with me to a passage of Scripture. Jesus had been crucified. He had been buried, and on the third day He had been raised from

the dead. But most people did not yet know it. And as He is on the way to Emmaus, he meets two sad ex disciples of His. And as they walked along, He caught up with them and said, "How come so sad?" And they said, "Are you only a stranger to the events that have taken place?" And Jesus said, "What are you talking about? What events?" And they said, "Well, we had a man here, and we became convinced He was the long awaited Messiah. He was a mighty prophet, and the things He did; well we had never seen or even heard the likes before. We rejoiced. At long last the time had come. And when we were sure He was about to put down the Romans and set up the long promised kingdom, then He was killed. Our hopes were dashed into a thousand pieces. We were deflated, beyond measure. And now some have come to tell us that He is alive again, and we are so torn. We want to believe that but we hardly dare, lest our hopes should be destroyed again." I am putting what they must have thought in my own words.

Now let us read Luke 24:25-27. Now tell me from Jesus own words, does it really matter what they believed about prophecy? Of course it does. If they had believed the prophecies of Scripture they would have understood all along what would happen. And Jesus upbraids them for not understanding what they could have understood, had they studied the prophetic Word of God. Jesus called them foolish ones. The word is anoetos. They were ignorant. They did not know what they should have known.

Now let me take you to the heart of the longest prophetic section given by Jesus Christ when He was on earth. It is found in Matthew 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21. We are going to turn to Matthew 24. In this chapter, the time is just a few days before His crucifixion, and in this chapter the topic is the tribulation. In verse 15, we find ourselves right in the middle of the tribulation. It is right here that the number 666 will take affect.

And in this verse Jesus says, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place, (whoever reads let him understand)..." Now here Jesus states a fact that is still future to us. Let me ask here this

morning, who could come and give us an explanation of this prophecy? Now note what the writer adds these words to this prophetic utterance, "whoever reads, let him understand". How many of you have read this before? Have you been obedient to this Scripture yet? Can anyone understand this statement without at least a general understanding of prophecy?

In Genesis 18, when God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" And His answer to Himself is, "No, he will become a great man of God and a mighty nation." So God told Abraham. God always lets His people know before He does it if He is going to do some great thing that will affect them. Amos 3:7 says, *Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.* And his servants the prophets wrote them down so that all God's servants might know what is coming.

Anyone who understands the prophetic Word of God today, can understand basically what will happen in Israel in the future. We know that things will be troublesome in Israel. We know it will get worse. We know a man will rise who will seem to make peace. We know that he will bring about the number 666. We know that a false church will become very powerful and will work right along side this man we know as antichrist, for the Bible tells us that all this will happen.

So, is it important to understand prophecy? Does God want us to understand prophecy? Why else would he give it?

C. The Major Historical Events

Now let me give you the major events of History, as related to the Bible, along with the dates. We will measure all events from the time of Christ, the central figure of everything, including time. We believe He was born about 4000 years after creation. The Jewish view differs from that by some 250 years. According to their reckoning, creation took place 3760 years before Christ. Nevertheless, our agreement on dates is quite close in light of all that happened in those years. It is also quite close in light of

the evolutionary view of the universe. In evolution you can differ by a few million or billion years and be considered quite close. So we begin with God and creation, with the view that it was at about 4000 BC. That is very close by any literal reckoning of historical events.

1. God and Creation 4000 BC (Genesis 1-2)

The very first and great event, of course, is creation. You see, someone has said, history is His story. And the Bible opens with the greatest event of all events like this, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." If you were not here for the series of messages on Genesis 1-3, I would encourage you to get those. These are incredibly important chapters to the entire Word of God. I do not know if you have heard of the new Renovari Bible, but it claims that the first 11 or 12 chapters of the Bible are a myth. Well, you might as well throw all 66 books of the Bible away if that is so. It is also incredibly amazing how many big name evangelicals support that translation. When the first chapters of the Bible are undermined, by a Bible, throw that whole Bible away. When a preacher begins to question the validity of these early chapters, get rid of him. When your church begins to question the validity of these chapters, find a new church. The first and great event in history to man is the creation of the universe.

2. Noah and the Flood 2300 BC (Genesis 6-8)

Well we will jump ahead to the flood. After the earth had been in existence for about 1700 years, man degenerated to such an extent that God destroyed all but Noah's family and began again to populate the earth.

3. Abraham and the Jews 2000 BC (Genesis 12)

From the flood we move ahead another 300 years to Abraham. Now Abraham was born about the time Noah died. And God called Abraham to come out of Ur of the Chaldees, to go to a country He would show Him. With Abraham, the Jewish nation began. With

Abraham, the people we know as Muslims today also began, through a son Abraham should not have had by name of Ishmael.

4. Moses and the Pentateuch 1500 BC

Then we move ahead another 500 years which brings us to Moses. The earth has now existed for about 2500 years. It is at this time that Moses wrote the five books that stand first in our Bibles; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

5. David and the Kings of Israel 1000 BC

Take another 500 year step ahead to 1000 BC and we come to king David. Jesus is called the Son of David, since He came through the line of David.

6. The Jews and the loss of their nation (722 and 586 BC)

In 722 BC, after years of warning from God and disobedience to Him, the northern kingdom of Israel was deported. It never regained power. Then God warned Judah, the southern kingdom but they too disobeyed and in 586 BC the southern kingdom went into exile. From that time on Israel never flourished as a nation under the control of God again.

7. Malachi and the last Bible book 400 BC

Well, throughout the time of the kings of Israel, God sent prophets to correct the nation and to reveal the future. These prophets prophesied, even when Israel had ceased to exist as a nation. Then, about 400 BC, Malachi, penned the last book of the OT and the prophets fell silent until John the Baptist and Jesus came on the scene.

8. Jesus and Bethlehem 4 BC & AD (Matt. 1-2; Luke 1-2)

So we come to the birth of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. We think it was in 4BC when Jesus, the long promised Messiah and Redeemer was born. Why

4 BC? Should it not have been 0 BC? Well, it is due to an error in calendar calculations. A study of calendars is an extremely complicated study. The calendar as we have it today was developed in 1582, by the Roman Catholic Pope, Gregory the 13th. This calendar made an error of a few years so that the birth of Christ was about 4 BC on our calendar. The birth of Christ marks the most important date in all of time past and future. God became man!

9. Jesus and the Cross 30 AD (Gospels)

From the birth of Christ we go a mere 33 years to the next major event; His death, burial and resurrection. Approximately 30 AD, Jesus, at the age of 33 was crucified. From sinful mankind's perspective, this is the central event of all history. Here redemption was sealed. So we have tremendously important dates happening within a very short time.

10. The Church and the Gentiles 30 AD (Acts 2)

50 days after Christ's resurrection, the Church was born. This would still have been in 30 AD. From that time until today, God's greatest work on earth has been the building of the Church. Very soon, we believe, the work of building the Church will be done and the Lord will rapture the Church, and another age will begin. We will look at that in this series.

11. John and Revelation 90 AD

Well, the NT was written from approximately 50 AD to 90 AD. The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation somewhere in the 90's. This marked the close of the writing of Scripture.

12. The Jews and Israel 1948 AD

I believe that the major date between the closing of the canon of Scripture and 2006 is the year 1948, when Israel became a nation. That is an event that by all odds should never have happened. By all odds, Israel's existence should

cease with every new dawning day. It exists sheerly by miracle every day. The coming into existence of the nation of Israel, prior to the rapture is the preparation of God for the 70th week of Daniel, the tribulation time period of which we will see more in detail later.

CONCL: And so I want to conclude our first message on the topic of prophecy. First, does God view it as important that we understand Bible prophecy? He does. I encourage you, that even if this topic is not of great interest to you, that you get a basic handle on this topic. And then when you read Scripture, read it in light of that.

Second, there are two types of prophecy. One is to exhort God's people to live right and the other is to relate events before they happen. It is the latter that we are going to be looking at. We have 6000 years of history behind us, and we can know from the Bible that we have 1000 years plus before us in the present system. And from our time to the end of those 1000 plus years several very significant things are going to happen and we know what they are. That is what we are going to be looking at.

So, today we are at the years 2006. And in prophecy, we are interested in what lies in our future. It is here that we find no other source like the Bible. From the Bible we can determine what is still future. Jesus said to the two on the road to Emaus, "Oh foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all the prophets have spoken."

I am glad that in this church I do not have to fear the congregation, in preaching on prophecy or even other touchy matters. Some time ago I spoke on some things that I found somewhat hard to deliver and after the service, one of you said, "In this church, you never have to be afraid to preach the truth." I thank God for that.