

Prophecy In Perspective Lesson 4

(Turn over Revelation 20.)

Last week we read where Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had a terrifying dream. Bible says his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. That's the way I was last night. All prepared to start new series on 1 John. But ... I felt impressed there is more we need to discuss concerning end times events.

Creeds & most Confessions only deal with a very few, but hugely important events: 2nd coming, resurrection of the dead, universal judgment.

As seen in **Re 20:11-15 (read)**

ESV **John 5:28-29** ... hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Second Coming: The word Trinity is not in the Bible, neither is rapture or missionary or even the word Bible. So too the phrase, Second Coming, is not in the bible. What it does refer to is the 2nd "appearing" of Jesus:

ESV **Hebrews 9:28** so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Lessons:

1. Draw distinction between judgment coming and Second Appearing, between end of age and the end of the world.
2. All else is fair game (beast/false prophet/antichrist/one world government/Israel/7 years tribulation/etc.).

Big Picture: Not many passages in the New Testament make predictions. Here are the basics:

1. Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21, but not John (Revelation?), Judgment coming/A.D. 70.
2. 1 Corinthians 15, resurrection of the dead/rapture/2nd coming.
3. 1 Thessalonians 4-5 and 2 Thessalonians 2, 2nd coming/Day of the Lord.
4. 2 Peter 3, The destruction of earth.
5. Revelation.

Master these and you'll have a good grasp of NT predictions.

As you know, I believe, my studied opinion, that many very scary NT predictions have already been fulfilled (A.D. 70).

Overall, I am very optimistic: Church is a rock that becomes a mountain that fills whole earth.
Church is like mustard seed that becomes largest plant in garden. The church is like yeast that spreads throughout the whole loaf.

Caveat: It does look like bad things will happen just before the 2nd coming.

Millennium: Revelation 20:7-10 (read). At the end of the millennium Satan is loosed. After this is the Great White Throne Judgment, the Resurrection of the Dead.

In the passage just before the millennium:

ESV **Revelation 19:19** And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

Same event or different?

Sum:

Long church age, "From victory unto victory His army shall he lead." Then, just before 2nd coming, all hell breaks loose

You have what in essence is a tribulation period (not necessarily seven years), then the 2d coming

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

How does this rebellion end? (See below)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 The rapture/2nd coming app: encourage one another

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 don't know when he is coming, but be ready not asleep: encourage one another

Now, let's talk more about rapture/2ndcoming/resurrection:

1 Corinthians 15:12, 20-24, 50-57, Application: 15:58

Don't be asleep spiritually

Encourage one another

Be steadfast, immovable, abound the work of the Lord

Know this: our labor in the lord is not in vain.

Application Review: God is in control of human history and of course He is in control of our lives. The Lord is good. Faith accepts this truth even when it seems like God is not in control or is not good.

ESV **Isaiah 40:15-17** Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust ... All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

ESV **Isaiah 40:22-24** It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows on them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

God is on control of your life.

ESV **Matthew 10:28-30** And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Stephen E. Atkerson
NTRF.org

Extra Material:

******How can you get a blessing from the book of Revelation (1:1-3)?** A blessing is promised both for reading the book aloud and for hearing and keeping it.

Application: Rather than being scared by the prophecies of Revelation, we should look forward to a blessing!

Why is it necessary to read “aloud” (ESV) to get the blessing (1:3)? In the days before printing presses, most people did not have their own copies of the Bible. Thus, Bible readings were common. The person who had the Bible (or portion of it) would read it aloud for the others to hear.

ESV **1 Timothy 4:13** ... devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture ...

Example: The church in China is growing so fast that many people do not have a copy of the Bible, especially in the countryside. At a meeting of Chinese church planters, I asked what such meetings were like. I was told that they sang, they prayed, various people would give testimony of God’s work in their lives, and that the person who had the Bible would read aloud from it.

What does the word “revelation” (1:1) mean? It is from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, “unveiling” (basis for our word “apocalypse” ~ not to be confused with apothecary!). The idea is that of a stage where the curtain is pulled back, allowing the audience to see the set and actors. The book of Revelation is a supernatural revealing of things that were future to John’s readers.

According to 1:1, what is the source of this revelation? Jesus Christ. According to 1:2, it is the “testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Based on 1:1, what is the purpose of this book? Its purpose was to show the servants of Jesus “the things that must soon take place.”

What does “soon” (1:1) mean? “Soon” is from *tachos* (5034, basis for “tachometer”), “speedily, quickly” (Thayer). BAGD’s lexicon generally defines it as “speed, quickness, swiftness, haste” (p. 807). Specific examples from antiquity given by BAGD are “quickly, at once, without delay” and “soon, in a short time”.

In 1:1, how might it change the meaning if it read “quickly” instead of “soon”? “Quickly” is associated with methodology and “soon” with time. Some feel that *tachos* is with reference to when these things will happen (“soon”) and others feel that *tachos* has reference to how these things will happen (the way it will happen: rapidly, “quickly”).

Translation Survey: “Soon” (ESV, NIV, RSV), “shortly (KJV, NAS, ASV).

What does 1:3 indicate about how soon “soon” was in 1:1? In 1:3 it says that “the time is near” which suggests that the “soon” of 1:1 really does mean “soon” (in time) and not “quickly” (in method).

How do the time statements in 1:1-3 help us to decide on which of the most common interpretive approaches (preterist, futurist, historicist, and idealist) is most likely correct?

Futurist: The futurist approach assumes that the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecies is at least 2,000 years removed from the first century. That hardly seems to be “soon” (1:1) or “near” (1:3) to the first century. Though they can explain away the “soon” as “quickly”, not so with “the time is near.”

Idealist: The idealist would say these prophecies applied then (soon) and ever since then, that the time is always near.

Historicist: The historicists would say that the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecies was soon to start; the time of the beginning was near. They would say the book continues to be fulfilled, though now we would be nearing the final chapters.

Preterist: The time statements in 1:1-3 seem to best fit with the preterist view (that the prophecies were fulfilled within the lifetimes of the original readers).

It says that the time is near (1:3); the time for what is near? The fulfillment of the words of prophecy in this book was near.

Why might it not be valid to explain away the time indicators of 1:1-3 by appealing to 2 Peter 3:8-9?

ESV 2 Peter 3:8 ... do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

God may experience time in the way described by Peter, but people do not. To write a book to people using God’s perspective of time would be deceitful, a trick, purposely misleading. One may as well have not been given any time frame; it becomes meaningless. It seems to be a desperate attempt to explain the time statements away.