



Why Study Bible Prophecy?

*"Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."
(Revelation 22:7)*

Note: Scripture used in this Bible Study is from the New King James Version.

1. A related and even more fundamental question: Why study the Bible?

God gave the Bible to us so that we may know Him and be saved...

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

What is the key reason given by 2 Timothy 3:16 why we should study Bible Prophecy?

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. So if you are not studying all Scripture, you are neglecting the Word of God.

There are more prophetic verses in the Bible than those that address salvation, faith, blood atonement for sin, and many other important doctrines...

- 28.5% of the verses in the Old Testament present prophetic material.
- 21.5% of the verses in the New Testament present prophetic material.

How can a book that was written so long ago be relevant for today?

The Bible is certainly as relevant for today as it was when it was written because, contrary to evolutionary thought, *"there is nothing new under the sun"* (Eccl 1:9)...

Hebrews 13:8 - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

God is almighty enough to be able to accurately bring us His Word and preserve it even using His error-prone creation.

This is beyond our mortal minds to comprehend but God is outside the confines of time so what will happen tomorrow is seen as clearly by Him as if it had already happened...

Isaiah 46:9-10 - Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'

2. Verse 16: For what should the Bible be used?

The Bible is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

What is doctrine?

Doctrine is teaching or instruction. For example, how to be saved and please God is important doctrine.

What is reproof?

Reproof is to refute adversaries of Christ or those holding on to false doctrine.

How is it useful for correction?

the Bible tells us how to set things right in our life

To whom does this correction apply to?

All people need correction, there is no one who "has arrived" and is without need for correction in some matter.

How should we correct others?

We should correct others in Christian love - we ourselves may also need correction...

2 Timothy 2:24-26 - And a servant of the Lord **must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility** correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

See also Matthew 18:15-20

It also says "for instruction in righteousness"... What makes us righteous?

God is righteous... God uses the Bible to reveal to us who He is and what we may do to be more like Him...

"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10)

Is there any part of this we do ourselves?

No - It is not anything we do ourselves, it is something God does for us...

Ephesians 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

We are made righteous in God's eyes if we trust in Jesus so why do we need instruction in righteousness?

People need instruction in righteousness so we may please God by thinking and acting in accordance to His will to His greater glory.

How is our faith strengthened?

Our faith is strengthened through a relationship with Christ...

1 John 1:6-7 - If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

To have fellowship together, we must speak to each other. We speak to God in prayer, how does God speak to us?

God speaks to us through His Word...

Hebrews 1:1-2 - God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 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 truth of God's Word has been demonstrated to us in the person of Jesus Christ...

John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

In fact, The Word of God is one of the names given for Christ...

Revelation 19:13 - He (Jesus) was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

3. Verse 17: What will you become as you study the Scriptures?

Those who study the Scriptures will become complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work...

Ephesians 2:10 - For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

What is a good work?

An act done in accordance to God's will

How can the same act (such as giving to a needy person) not be recognized as a good work by God?

One may be done with the proper attitude, the other not:

Matt 6:2-4 - "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what

your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."

How does God view good works done to glorify ourselves?

Acts of self-justification are worthless in God's eyes...

Isaiah 64:6 - all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags

4. Romans 10:17 - What will grow as you study the Scriptures?

Romans 10:17 - So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Studying God's Word helps us to grow in faith...

The Authority of the Prophetic Word

Reference: 2 Peter 1:16-21

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

5. Verses 16-18: What event in the life of Jesus do these verses refer to?

This passage refers to the transfiguration of Jesus...

Matt 17:1-5 - Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

What is significant about who was with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration?

I believe the transfiguration of Jesus was a picture of God's kingdom in miniature:

Moses - represented those saved during the dispensation of Law in the Old Testament

Elijah – represented the prophets and the remnant of Old Testament saints

Peter, James, & John – represented the New Testament saints of the church

How were people saved during Old Testament times?

- The same way they are today: by grace through faith in Christ
- The Jews were (and still are) looking forward to the Messiah who would save them

6. Verse 16: What did the apostle Peter say the story about Jesus was not?

a cunningly devised fable; that is, a made-up story

7. Verse 19: What is Peter speaking of that is "confirmed" or "made more sure"?

Peter is saying the word of prophecy is more sure than what he saw on the mount of Transfiguration

Why is the Word of God is better than seeing and hearing?

We can be deceived through our experiences...

2 Cor 5:7 - For we walk by faith, not by sight.

How then should we regard the Word of God?

- The Word of God is the only tangible supernatural thing we have in this world today.
- The apostles of the Old Testament have recorded as history what was given in the Old Testament as prophecy.
- The truth of both the Old & New Testaments are demonstrated by...
 - the accomplishment of the O.T. prophecies as reported by the N.T.
 - the way the N.T. agrees with the O.T.

Why is there such consistency between the Old and New Testaments?

Heb 13:8 - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

- So, the Old Testament should be read as a prophecy of Christ, the New Testament should be read as an exposition of the Old Testament.

8. Verse 19: How long should you heed the Bible?

You should heed the Bible at least until Jesus rises in your heart. (Jesus is the Morning Star...)

Rev 22:16 - "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

Does this verse mean that we do not need to study the Bible after we're saved?

No, as long as we're in the world during this dispensation, we're in a dark place... the day dawns for us when we die or when Christ calls his church out of the world. I believe we will continue to be blessed by studying God's Word even after we are resurrected since God's Word "*will by no means pass away*" (Matthew 24:35).

9. Verse 20: What does it mean the Bible is not of any private interpretation?

- man-made and therefore error-prone
- no portion of the Scriptures is to be interpreted apart from other references to the same subject. It important to recognize:
 1. The context
 2. The audience and/or the circumstances
 3. The dispensation

What are dispensations?

An era of time during which humankind is tested in respect to obedience to some definite revelation of God's will.

Innocence - how humankind was created, ended at the eating of the forbidden fruit.

Conscience - humankind knows good and evil, ended at the flood.

Human Government - humankind rules & judges for God, ends at Christ's second coming.

Israel: Promise - the Abrahamic covenant which still applies.

Israel: Law - from the giving of the Mosaic Law till the first advent of Christ.

Grace - began at the death & resurrection of Christ, ends at the rapture of the church.

Kingdom - the millennial reign of Christ over the nations beginning when He physically returns and ending when He recreates Heaven and Earth

What false doctrines come to mind because they are based on misinterpretations of Bible verses?

Salvation by works, losing one's salvation, the church replacing Israel in God's plan, anything but a pre-Tribulation rapture, amillennialism.

10. Verse 21: From where and where not did the apostle Peter say the Bible came?

Not by the will of man, but the Holy Spirit speaking through holy men of God... The Bible is a supernatural book: the world does not recognize it as such because most people have a problem believing that the supernatural exists.

**11. Verse 21: Why were these men called "holy"?
Were they called holy because they were super saints?**

No. they were set apart for this particular office, holy means "to be set apart."

Why is God holy?

He is set apart from sinful man

Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

How is the gap between God and man bridged?

Jesus Christ is our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5)...

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

How may we be holy?

By being saved. God saves us for a purpose and sets us apart for service to Him...

1 Peter 2:5 - you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

12. Verses 16-18: How did Peter know the story was true about Jesus on the mount of transfiguration?

Peter was there at the mount, he experienced it.

13. Verses 19-21: What source did Peter indicate was superior to his experience?

Scripture trumped Peter's experience.

How can the Bible be more sure than an experience like witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus?

- The important messages in the Bible have more than one reference to support them.
- The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible and will help us see the truth.

Now let's take a look at some other reasons to study prophecy...

14. Isaiah 46:9-10 - What is the only reliable source for knowing about the future?

Isaiah 46:9-10 - Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'

Almighty God is the only source of 100% accurate prophecy.

- He wouldn't be Almighty if He couldn't make happen what He said would happen.
- He wouldn't be Almighty if He couldn't use his error-prone creation to accurately record and preserve His Word.

What other major religions have prophecy in their writings?

Moslem Koran? No, Hindu? No, Confucious? No, Buda? No, Mormon Pearl of Great Price? No... Cults & New Age Religions do: Nostradamis, Edar Casey

How accurate are new age prophets?

They are far from the requirement to be 100% accurate as required by prophets of God...

Deut 18:20 - the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.

However I was impressed by an article that indicated CIA psychics were right 20% of the time - this is not something you want to bet on but still surprisingly significant

How is it cults, New Agers, and psychics can sometimes get it right?

The information from new age prophets is from demons which are intelligent beings that can sometimes influence outcomes.

Do we need the proof of archaeology that the Bible is historically accurate?

no - the facts are made real to us by the Holy Spirit

Does archaeology prove that the Bible is historically accurate?

yes (archaeology has proven to provide more support for the Bible than contradiction)

There are over 330 prophecies (108 separate) in the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ. What percentage of them were literally fulfilled?

100%

Can you draw any conclusions on who is the source of Scripture from this statistic?

God

Note: For only 7 of the prophecies of Christ's first advent to happen accidentally, this is a probability of 1:10¹⁷ ~ the number of silver dollars it would take to cover Texas knee deep...

How would you counter skeptics who say, "Jesus could have read the prophecies & fulfilled them on purpose"?

Most of the Messianic prophecies Jesus fulfilled could not have been done on his own... such as where He was born, being born in the line of David, His manner of death, others casting lots for His robe, Romans using a spear instead of breaking His bones to make sure He was dead, and of course His resurrection.

15. 2 Timothy 4:8 - What reason did Paul give for why we should study Bible prophecy?

2 Tim 4:8 - Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- All who are made righteous by Christ love His appearing. If you love Christ, you will love His appearing.
- The Lord will reward us for living a life where we look forward to His appearing.
- Rewards we receive at our judgment (the ultimate performance review) are more valuable than anything in this world, something we should not take lightly.

16. Titus 2:11-13 - What term did Paul use for the event that is coupled with the appearing of Christ?

Titus 2:11-13 - For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, The blessed hope refers to our resurrection.

How does Titus 2:13 say we should live?

It says we should live with the earnest expectation that the Lord could return at any time.

Does living with the earnest expectation that Jesus could return at any moment mean you should quit your job and set up camp somewhere in the mountains waiting for Him?

No, this is what date setters do. It is unfortunate that Bible prophecy has been associated with setting dates for the Lord's return. Those who set dates are actually serving the enemy of God since they are working to discredit God's Word. The Lord made it very clear that we can not know exactly when He would return, we'll have more to say about this later.

So what then does it mean to live with the expectation that we could find ourselves in Christ's presence at any moment?

It simply means that we should live holy lives. Jesus said that we should be found conducting ourselves as wise stewards when He comes...

Luke 12:42-43 - And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes."

17. Revelation 1:3 - What is the three-fold promise we are given concerning Bible prophecy in this verse?

Rev 1:3 - Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

The person who (1) reads, (2) hears, (3) keeps God's prophetic Word will be blessed by Him. This is reinforced at the end of the book...

Rev 22:7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

What does it mean to hear God's Word?

Hear is more than just listen, it means to understand, to comprehend with the intent to apply it to your life.

What does it mean that the time is near?

Certainly in the context of eternity, the Lord's return can not be far off for anyone. But this also says that there is only a finite period of time between when this was written and the Lord's coming. If the time was short then, it is even shorter now.

18. Revelation 19:10 - What reason did the angel give John for the importance of prophecy?

Revelation 19:10 - And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus Christ. This is what the book of Revelation is about, it is the revealing of Jesus Christ to the world (Rev 1:1). Indeed, the gospel itself is prophetic by telling believers that they will spend eternity in Heaven with the Lord.

How is this for another reason why we should study Bible Prophecy...

Recall that there are more prophetic verses in the Bible that those that address salvation, faith, blood atonement for sin, and many other important doctrines...

- 28.5% of the verses in the Old Testament present prophetic material.
- 21.5% of the verses in the New Testament present prophetic material.

While there are over 300 prophecies of Christ's first advent in the Old Testament, there are more than 500 prophecies about His second coming. And one out of 25 verses in the New Testament pertain to His second coming

Why does the Bible have so much more to say about the Lord's second coming than His first advent?

God has revealed more about the second coming out of His grace. The Lord's second coming is in wrath to execute His judgment on mankind and He wants His people to be ready.

19-23. If a fourth of the Word of God is prophetic material, why do most churches avoid studying prophecy?

19. Malachi 4:1 - What example of an excuse not to study prophecy might this verse represent?

Malachi 4:1 - "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.

- It is **too scary** - with judgments, fire & brimstone with people dying...

How should you view the "scary" prophecies about the Lord's second coming?

But it should be scary for the unsaved... If fear of God's judgment sends you to the Lord for salvation, these scare tactics are a good thing

Prov 9:10 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Prov 19:23 - The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil.

If a person is bothered by the events associated with the Lord's coming, what is he probably trusting in for salvation?

They are probably trusting in their own good works to be justified before God. If a person believes they are saved by their works, they don't want the Lord to come on a bad day... However if you know you are saved by grace, there are no "bad days".

20. Matthew 7:15-16 - What excuse not to study prophecy might this verse provide?

Matthew 7:15-16 - "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?"

- Out of a fear of false prophets, churches have avoided prophecy altogether.

Are false prophets a valid concern?

Yes...

- **Cults** - Bible prophecy has gotten a bad name because of cults and self-proclaimed prophets who have distorted

the Word of God to serve their own purposes. These things have caused most churches to avoid Bible prophecy out of fear of being thought of as a cult.

- **Date setters** - There have also been sincere Christians who have set dates for Christ's return that have come and gone only to damage the credibility of Bible prophecy. They ignore what Jesus said in Matthew 24:36, "*of that day and hour no one knows.*"

How are people duped by cults and date-setters?

They do not have the benefit of the Holy Spirit to help them discern the truth. We should not fear these groups but should trust God that The Holy Spirit will help us discern the truth...

1 Cor 2:14-15 - But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things...

The Bible gives us guidelines to help...

1 John 4:2-3 - By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

What characteristics distinguishes cults?

(thanks to Dave Breeze...)

1. Extra Biblical revelation - *False doctrine from outside the Bible*
2. Salvation by works - *Denial of salvation by faith alone*
3. Uncertain hope - *Cultists are never sure of heaven*
4. Presumptuous messianic leadership - *Arrogant religious rulers command others*
5. Defective Christology - *Denial of the Deity or humanity of Christ*
6. Segmented Biblical attention - *Ignoring the whole counsel of God*
7. Financial Exploitation - *Money is the object*
8. Denunciation of others - *All others are infidels, reprobates*
9. Sexual exploitation - *Having eyes full of adultery*
10. Syncretism - *Allowing a composite, pagan religion*
11. Religious enslavement - *Denying freedom in Christ*
12. Entangling organizational structure - *Membership equals salvation*

You can sum these up as follows: cults always (1) **ADD** to God's Word, (2) **MULTIPLY** the value of works, (3) **SUBTRACT** from who Jesus Christ is, and (4) attempt to **DIVIDE** members from the church and their families.

21. Matthew 24:36 - What excuse not to study prophecy might this verse provide?

Matthew 24:36 - "of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

- We can not know when Christ will come so why does it really matter. There is also...
Acts 1:7 - And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."
- Note that the Greek word for "seasons" means "times in which certain foreordained events take place"

If we can not know when Christ will return, why bother to study Bible prophecy?

While we can not know the specific time of the Lord's return, the Bible does tell us we can know the general time-frame...

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 - "concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you... But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober."

Certainly Jesus gave us signs to watch for in the Olivet discourse and the Apostles gave us characteristics of the time just preceding Christ's return as well. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for knowing how to read the sky to predict the weather but not knowing how to discern the signs of the times...

Matthew 16:1-4 - Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed.

He was specifically referring to His first coming but this applies to His second coming as well because both were prophesied.

If you are a Christian, why won't this Day overtake you as a thief?

- this day will not rob us of salvation because once we're saved, we're always saved
- also, we will not be surprised as a thief would do us, because we are ready and watching
- Jesus gave us signs to help us watch for Him (Matthew 24) and the writer of Hebrews tells us we can see the Day approaching...

Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more **as you see the Day approaching.**

What Day is Hebrews 10:25 talking about?

It is the Day of the Lord's return. Note that this verse would have to be different if the church could not see the Day of the Lord approaching.

When Jesus walked the earth, he said He was God (John 10:30, 14:9). If this is the case and God is Almighty, why didn't Jesus know the time of his return?

Jesus who created everything as God took the form of a man so that He could make the only sacrifice acceptable to atone for our sins...

Philippians 2:5-8 - Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God" because He was, is, and will always be God...

Hebrews 13:8 - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Jesus is now back with the Father having the omniscience He had before the creation. This is clear from what He prayed before He was crucified...

John 17:5 - "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Jesus does not know when He will return but He didn't know when He walked the earth as a man. Christ humbled Himself by limiting His powers while in the form of a man. When Jesus was on earth, He did not know when He would return because He was bound by time as all men are. Christ allowing Himself to be bound by time was part of the sacrifice He made for us.

22. 2 Peter 3:3-6 - What reason did Peter give for why people would not to study prophecy?

2 Peter 3:3-6 - "Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. For this they **willfully forget**: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water."

- People will forget that God poured out His wrath on the earth before.

Why do people scoff at the Lord's return?

People scoff at the Lord's return out of personal rebellion, they don't want to recognize the eminent return of the Lord because it may force them to change something in their life they think they need.

How do professing Christians rationalize their personal rebellion?

People have a propensity to take a liberal view of the Bible and "spiritualize" the eminent return of Christ to mean He will not literally return.

- "God does not mean what He says" - this puts God in a box & limits His power
- Example - "We're in the millennium now: Satan was bound at the cross"
- If you spiritualize the Bible, it is completely subject to interpretation and can mean whatever you want it to mean.

Does anyone know the term which describes the collective personal rebellion of the professing church that occurs in the time prior to the Lord's return?

Apostasy - an apparent "falling away" from the faith (but they never truly believed)... Apostate churches twist the literal truth into something that fits their philosophies...

- Jesus coming back ~ "Jesus comes into your heart"
- Salvation ~ "growing more mature is being saved"
- "The world will get better until Christ comes (through human efforts)" -they deny the prophesied apostasy

Every generation of Christians have thought Christ would return during their life and He did not, so why should this generation be any different?

These attitudes are in themselves prophetic. Lets read 2 Peter 3 again...

2 Peter 3:3-8 - knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Why does it say a thousand years is as one day, why doesn't it say a hundred-thousand or a million years is as one day?

I believe the reference to a thousand years has significance.

I'm going to introduce a concept here that may be new to some of you so bear with me. Let's assume for the moment that people and the earth haven't been around for the millions and billions of years as the conventional wisdom would have us believe. **What if mankind has only walked this earth for about 6000 years?**

How long has it been since Christ came the first time?

We know that it has been about 2000 years since Christ came the first.

Can we know how long has it been between the Creation, the flood during Noah's day, and the first coming of Christ?

We can not know exactly but the genealogies in the Bible give us a general sense that Noah's flood was around 2400 years before Christ and Adam was created around 1600 years before the flood. As you study the genealogies given in the Bible, particularly those in Matthew and Luke given to record the lineage of Jesus, you'll see that there was about 2000 years between Adam and Abraham and another 2000 years between Abraham and Jesus...

According to the genealogy for Jesus given in Luke 3:23-38, there were 65 ancestors between Noah and Jesus and 9 ancestors between Adam and Noah. You can make a ballpark estimate of the time that this represents by assuming there were an average of 40 years between generations after the flood. This is a good figure to use because 40 years is often used by the Bible to represent a generation like with the period of time Israel was in the wilderness before entering the promised land. This 40 years also accounts for skipped generations which may have been the case. The time period between Adam and Noah are actually given in the genealogy given in Genesis 5:3-32 which works out to be an average of 150 years between generations. This makes sense since people lived longer before the flood.

So a literal interpretation of the Bible would lead us to believe mankind has only been around for about 6000 years. God did not give us sufficient data to know the exact time because some might use this to set dates for Christ's return.

When you consider that time is part of God's creation, this helps us see human history in the proper light. Time is just another dimension that defines our world like length, height, and breadth that describes space. God Himself is outside the confines of time and He created time as part our world to give us a context to help us relate to His creation. The Bible teaches that the original creation has become corrupted due

to man's sin and God will be setting things right. We will have a new creation and with it time will be changed as well.

How does knowing that it has only been a couple thousand years between some pretty significant events in history give you a sense that Christ could return at any moment?

Now if we hold to the belief that sure God created man but he used evolution to do it taking millions of years, the flood might have just been a local event some hundreds of thousand years ago and just got distorted into a worldwide event through the passage of time. We still know Christ came 2000 years ago but since He took a million years to come the first time, there is no reason to believe why He wouldn't take at least another million years to come back. ("All things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.")

Why is belief in a relatively young earth an important doctrine?

The longer we think it has been since creation, the less urgent we feel the need to know Christ. This is clearly contrary to what the Bible teaches. The conflict over evolution and creation is really a subject of a Bible study lesson all its own and beyond the scope of what we have time for here. Let me just leave you some food for thought: **If God is truly Almighty as He claims to be, why couldn't He have created everything exactly as He said He did in Genesis?**

Does God work in patterns?

It is important to understand this concept if you are studying Bible prophecy... Establishing patterns is an important aspect of the Old Testament. Through the lives of the Old Testament patriarchs we see that sin always has consequences and we see the faithfulness of God even when we are not faithful. Speaking of these things we find...

1 Cor 10:11 - Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition

The word "examples" is from the Greek word "tupos" which means "form, figure, or pattern." The English word "type" is developed from the Greek word and provides the basis for why Bible students coined the word "typology." Typology refers to the Old Testament patterns that illustrate doctrine. For example the snatching away of Enoch and Elijah are Old Testament types of the rapture of the Church.

Is it true that history repeats itself? Why?

History repeats itself because people are basically the same throughout history, the same mistakes are made over and over again. Indeed the Bible reinforces this truth...

Ecc 1:9 - That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

We see Old Testament prophecies that appear to be partially fulfilled but not all the details of the prophecy are addressed, then later these details are seen in the actual fulfillment. These foreshowing fulfillments are types that serve as reminders and illustrations of what is to come. For example, Hitler was a type of the Antichrist. There are many parallels about what happened in Nazi Germany that lead many people to think that WWII was the tribulation but not all the details of the prophesied tribulation fit the WWII time.

How might you see the six days of creation and God resting on the seventh as a type of history itself?

Note that 2 Peter 3 is talking about the time of the end of history when the Lord returns where it says in verse 8, "*with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*". So the approximately 6000 years since creation as the Bible's genealogies portray will be to God as 6 days. The seventh day of rest is parallel to the millennial reign of Christ when He returns. So, in this sense, we are on the threshold of the 1000 year period of peace when Christ will rule on the earth as promised in the Bible.

23. What other reasons can you think of for why churches avoid studying Bible prophecy?

Too complex - The Bible is not completely clear on the sequence of certain end-time events.

Studying Bible prophecy does take some effort, it does not lend itself well to a superficial treatment. So studying Bible prophecy is not politically correct since it isn't consistent with the feel-good, fast-food, sound-bite culture we live in. It requires more in-depth study of the whole Bible as does all solid spiritual food (Hebrews 5:12-14). Misinterpretations of prophecy can only become apparent when they are scrutinized in the light of the whole Bible because they must fit with all other related passages. It is necessary to search the Scriptures on your own in order to discern which interpretations are true as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11. However, even a little interest in Bible prophecy can be used by God as I have experienced personally, God's Word does not return void (Isaiah 55:11).

What are the three different views people take regarding Bible prophecy?

There are three basic "camps" which are described by how they regard the millennial reign of Christ:

amillennial - we are in the millennium now, Christ will not literally return. These people don't believe in a rapture and think the tribulation has already past.

post millennial - Christ will return after a period of Church expansion and prosperity

pre-millennial - Christ returns to end the Great Tribulation & rule on earth 1000 yrs

...I understand there is also a fourth...

pan-millennial - it will all pan out in the end (ha ha)

How do people regard the Bible who take an amillennial or post millennial view of Bible Prophecy?

These people do not take the Word of God literally. They think that since symbolic language is used in Revelation that all prophecy is to be “spiritualized” – interpreted to mean what it does not say. They deny the supernatural saying that Satan was bound at the cross and that Jesus will not literally return. This view is held by most of liberal Christendom today.

What is the problem with “spiritualizing” everything the Bible says?

If you spiritualize enough, you can have the Bible say anything you want it to say. This is what cults do. The rule we should take about a Bible passage is: “If the plain sense meaning makes sense, seek no other sense or else you’ll end up with nonsense.”

What is the basic problem with the mid- or post-tribulation rapture?

It is not consistent with what the Bible teaches. We’ll delve more into this later but suffice it to say for now that this belief comes dangerously close to salvation-by-works theology where the Church has to suffer through some or all of the tribulation to be cleansed.

- Most Bible scholars expert in **eschatology** (the study of last things) take a pre-millennial view which is the most literal interpretation of the Bible.
 - We are on firm ground as long as we stick to what the Word of God says.
 - Any differences are minor - like when the rapture will occur (before, during or after the rapture) & when Russia will invade the Middle-East (Ezekiel 38-39).

Too controversial – proponents of Bible prophecy are said to be **too dogmatic**

- This criticism is usually from those who think we should not be dogmatic about anything because doctrine is divisive.

Should we avoid subjects that are divisive?

Certainly it is not always productive to get into subjects that do not have an impact on a person. However, there is doctrine we should be dogmatic about...

What are doctrines that we should be dogmatic about?

The Deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His death atoning for our sins if we believe it, His resurrection, you must be born again, once saved, always saved...

Does the Bible teach that we should expect God’s view to divide people?

Certainly...

Matt 10:34-36 – “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'”

Is believing that Christ will return necessary for salvation?

Absolutely, Jesus said He would return (see John 14:3). If you don’t believe what Jesus said, you do not believe Him and can not be saved.

Is believing that the rapture will occur before the tribulation a matter of salvation?

No, this is not an issue we should divide over but it is an important doctrine that can lead to great error. A belief in the post-trib rapture is a false doctrine which can lead to excessive separation from the world...

- modern conveniences are the mark of the beast
- a survivalist mentality - "enduring to the end" is stocking up and arming up to save oneself ("God helps those who help themselves" is not in the Bible)
- They look for the coming of the Antichrist rather than the Lord...

Romans 12:2 - And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

You don't have to avoid the world if your mind has been renewed and transformed by God.

Too escapist, too other worldly, too pie in the sky – detractors of Bible prophecy say we should study what should help us now.

Is this a valid argument, that studying Bible prophecy is not relevant because it is too far in the future to help us today?

Certainly an amillennialist or post millennialist would take this view. But our reaction to what will happen in the future bears on how we respond in the "here and now."

As Christians we are called to keep our minds on the spiritual ramifications of what we do in this world...

Colossians 3:1-2 - If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.