



# The Relevance of Bible Prophecy to Christian Living

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Presentation notes for Vacation Bible School 2004 Adult Bible Study

Note: These presentation notes are intended to go along with the PowerPoint presentation with the same title created by Dave Reagan of Lamb & Lion Ministries ([www.lamblion.com](http://www.lamblion.com)) for NACC in July, 2003. Scripture used in these notes is from the New King James Version.

## Slide 3

Tonight's presentation addresses the importance of Bible prophecy in living the Christian life.

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Let me start with a paradox: We worship a God of prophecy. Yet, we ignore the Prophetic Word and rich passages such as:

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Isaiah 46:9-11 which says:

9 ...I am God, and there is none like Me,

10 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.'

11 ... Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

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Let's take a look at why Bible Prophecy has a sad heritage of being ignored by the church.

First of all, Prophecy has been Abused by a number of different groups:

Apostates are those "believers" who mock the very idea that the Bible contains prophecy. 2 Peter 3:3-4 says 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.'"*

Some religious groups that call themselves Christian today have begun to deny fundamentals of the historic Christian faith such as the deity of Jesus, His virgin birth, sinless life and resurrection. Naturally this also include the trustworthiness of God's Word.

Spiritualizers are those who always claim that prophecy never means what it says. They don't believe the incredible prophecies in the Bible so they have to apply a spiritual meaning to what it says. Certainly there is symbolism in some prophetic passages but these sections are obvious and are often explained by Scripture itself. The best policy is: if the plain sense makes sense, look at it in no other sense or you'll end up with nonsense.

Then you have Fanatics who believe Bible prophecy is a playground for fanciful speculations. These are the sensationalists who Hank Haanegraff refers to as "newspaper eschatologists." You also have date setters like Edgar Whisenant who wrote a book titled "88 reasons why Jesus will return in 1988."

These abusers of Bible Prophecy has led to prophecy being ignored for a number of reasons:

Many consider Bible Prophecy to be Too Complex... "You have to have a doctorate in hermeneutics to understand it!" No, the truth is all you have to have is the Holy Spirit and a conviction that it can be understood.

Many consider Bible Prophecy Too Other Worldly... "It's all 'pie-in-the-sky' and has no relevance to the present." This is absolutely false, as we shall see.

Some ignore Bible Prophecy because they consider it Too Controversial since there are different interpretations... "It is too divisive and therefore must be ignored to preserve unity." This can be true, but doesn't have to be. How a person interprets Bible prophecy should not be viewed as a test of orthodoxy, it is not a matter of salvation and not something we should break fellowship over.

Some ignore Bible Prophecy because they say it is Too Scary "It's all about blood and gore and beasts and things that go bump in the dark!" But this is how unbelievers should regard prophecy... Proverbs 9:10 says, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."* The promises to believers are nothing but glorious: 1 Corinthians 2:9 says that the, *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

The Bottom Line is that there is A Satanic Conspiracy... Satan does not want anyone to understand Bible prophecy because it clearly reveals his ultimate defeat at the time of the triumphal return of Jesus. The message is that "Believers win in the end!" and Satan does not want anyone to know that message.

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There are a number of reasons why all believers should be interested in studying Bible prophecy:

First of all, one-fourth to one-third of the Bible is prophetic in nature. In the Old Testament, this includes the Psalms, the Major and Minor Prophets, and many passages in historical books. In the New Testament, entire books like 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Revelation are devoted to prophecy, as are major passages like Matthew 24 and 2 Peter 3.

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Secondly, no other book that serves as the basis of a major religion contains prophecy. This includes the Koran, the Book of Mormon, the Hindu Vedras and the sayings of Buddha and Confucius. Prophecy is one of the most unique aspects of the Bible. False gods cannot foretell the future.

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The Bible makes this clear, Isaiah 41:21-24 says, *"Can your idols make such claims as these? Let them come and show what they can do!" says God, the King of Israel. Let them try to tell us what occurred in years gone by, or what the future holds. Yes, that's it! If you are gods, tell what will happen in the days ahead!"* (The Living Bible)

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The third reason we should regard prophecy to be significant is that it Validates Scripture. The Bible contains hundreds of prophecies about persons, cities and nations - many of which have already been precisely fulfilled in history. This fact attests to the supernatural origin of the Bible. Let's consider some examples:

Isaiah 13 - Prophecies the fall of Babylon to the Medes and Persians and this was written while Assyria was the major world power, before Babylon had overthrown Assyria.

Micah 3:12 – The prophet Micah prophesied that Jerusalem would become a heap of ruins. Micah wrote this over 100 years before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians.

Jeremiah 29:10 – The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that the Babylonian captivity of the Jews will last 70 years.

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In Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1, the prophet Isaiah prophesied the Jews would be released from captivity by a man named Cyrus. He wrote this 150 years before Cyrus was born.

Daniel prophesied the history of world empires, predicting that the Babylonian Empire would be overthrown by the Medo-Persians, which, in turn, would fall to the Greeks, who, in turn, would be defeated by the Romans (Daniel 2:31-45).

The Old Testament prophets gave many prophecies about the Jewish people that have been fulfilled in history, such as:

- their worldwide dispersion (Deuteronomy 28:64)
- their persecution (Deuteronomy 28:65-67)
- their preservation (Jeremiah 31:35-37)
- the desolation of their land (Deuteronomy 29:22-28)
- their regathering (Isaiah 11-12)
- the re-establishment of their nation (Isaiah 66:7-8)
- the reclamation of their land (Ezekiel 36:34-35)
- the revival of their language (Zephaniah 3 :9)

Jesus made a number of prophecies that have been already been fulfilled of Jesus including the judgment of Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matthew 11:20-24) and the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:5-6).

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The fourth reason we should regard prophecy to be significant is that it Validates Jesus as being who He claimed to be... namely, God in the flesh. Let's consider some examples of this:

In Micah 5:2, the birthplace of Jesus was prophesied 700 years before His birth.

In Psalm 22:16, King David prophesies that the Messiah will be executed by crucifixion. This was written 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus and 500 years before the Romans even invented crucifixion.

Five hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Zechariah prophesied that:

- the Messiah would come on a donkey (9:9)
- be hailed as king (9:9)
- would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (11:12)
- which would be used to buy a potter's field (11:13)
- He also prophesied that the Messiah would be lifted up and pierced in the hands (13:6)

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There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah,

some of which are repetitious.

When the repetitious ones are eliminated, the remaining result is 108 separate and distinct prophecies regarding every aspect of the Messiah's life - His heritage, birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension. Every one of these prophecies was fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

The odds of just seven of these prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in someone's life are 1 in 10-to-the-power-of-17 or...

1 followed by 18 zeros,

that's one in one quadrillion!

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Peter Stoner illustrated the odds of this by saying this is about the same as being able to pick out a silver dollar that has been painted black on the first try while blindfolded after it has been mixed into a pile of silver dollars covering the whole state of Texas knee high.

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The fifth reason we should regard prophecy to be significant is that it is a very effective Tool for Evangelism. It is certainly what led me to Christ.

This was seen at Pentecost, the first Gospel sermon ever preached consisted of Bible prophecy from beginning to end (Acts 2: 14-36).

Phillip used Bible prophecy to convert the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-38).

Timothy came to faith in Jesus through his study of the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament...

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2 Timothy 3:15 says, *"From childhood you [Timothy] have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."*

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The sixth reason we should regard prophecy to be significant is that it is a Tool of Moral Teaching. The prophets spent more time forth-telling the present than they did fore-telling the future. Their sermons are a great repository of moral teaching that is applicable to the present.

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For example: Amos 5:21-24 is referring to Israel just going through the motions in worship where it says, *"I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*

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We can paraphrase of Amos to say, *"I hate, I reject your gospel meetings, nor do I delight in your worship services. Even though you offer up to Me your tithes and offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at your communion services. Take away from Me the noise of your hymns; I will not even listen to the sound of your pianos. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*

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Bible prophecy is relevant to the Spiritual Growth of Christians in that it provides Hope. The strength of a Believer's hope is directly related to his knowledge of Bible prophecy and the promises it contains about the future.

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For example, 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 says, *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has the mind of Man conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him."*

*But these things have been revealed through His Spirit..."*

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Bible prophecy helps us in our spiritual growth in that it Inspires Evangelism. As a Believer comes to understand through Bible prophecy that the Lord's return is imminent, he is motivated to share the Gospel with as many people as he can, as quickly as he can.

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Matthew 24:36-44 says, *"but of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Therefore be on the alert for you do not know which day your Lord is coming."*

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The third way Bible prophecy helps us in our spiritual growth is that it motivates us to be more like Christ. As with spurring us on to evangelize our neighbors, a sense of the Lord's imminent return will motivate a Believer to commit his life to holiness. This is because at the rapture, we can be here in one moment and in the next instant find ourselves before the Lord in heaven.

#### Slide 25

1 John 3:1-3 says, *“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

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So from what we’ve been looking at, we can make some conclusions about the relevancy of God’s prophetic Word... First of all, 1 Timothy 3:16-17 says that, **“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.”

Not that it says all Scripture is profitable to us. And that includes God's Prophetic Word as well. Romans 13:12-14 says, *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”*

So, in regards to Bible prophecy, we should read it, study it, and be blessed by it!