



Why Study Bible Prophecy?

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*"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.

2. 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.

3. 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.'

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.

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

This passage refers to the transfiguration of Jesus (see Matthew 17:1-5)

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

It was not a cunningly devised fable; that is, a made-up story.

6. 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

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

We can be deceived through our experiences...

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

8. 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 New 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.

9. 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.

10. 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."

11. 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).

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

- It is not sourced by men 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 the historical and literary context.

13. 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.

14. 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."

15. 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.

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

Scripture trumped Peter's experience.

17. 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.

15. What other major religions have prophecy in their writings?

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

16. 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

17. 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.

18. 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%

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. 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."

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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.

Why Most Churches Avoid Studying Prophecy

25. 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...

26. 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.

27. 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.

28. 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.*"

29. 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.

30. What characteristics distinguishes cults?

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.

31. 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"

32. 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 (see Matthew 16:1-4). 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.**

33. 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.

34. 2 Peter 3:3-6 - What reason did Peter give for why people would not 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.

35. 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.

36. 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.

37. 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

38. 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.

39. 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.

40. What if mankind has only walked this earth for about 6,000 years?

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.

41. How long has it been since Christ first came?

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

42. Can we know how long has it been between the Creation 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.

43. 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."*)

44. 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?

45. 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.

46. 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...

Eccl 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.

47. 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.

48. 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 or other worldly

Detractors of Bible prophecy say we should study what should help us now, not what is "pie in the sky."

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.