



The Relevance of Bible Prophecy to Christian Perspective

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) 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 shaping our Christian perspective.

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Tonight we are going to look at the daily practicality of Bible prophecy and thus address the problem people have with relating their Christian faith to current national and international events.

The manifestation of this problem is that current events cause many Christians to ask probing questions about why things are happening the way they do.

The thesis I'm going to make a case for tonight is that the more a person knows about Bible prophecy, the better he or she can understand the world in which we live and the better they can relate their faith to what is going on in the world.

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For example, the Bible explains why society appears to be breaking down in so many ways.

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The Bible contains many prophecies about what society will be like in the end times as we approach the return of Jesus.

For example Matthew 24:37 says, "*as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*" If you go back to Genesis 6 and read about what the world was like just prior to the flood you'll find that the earth was filled with violence (Genesis 6:13). So we should expect the time before Christ returns to be characterized with violence.

2 Timothy 3:1-4 gives a laundry list of problems that society will have prior to the Lord's return.

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Realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...

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Take note of the three things that people will love in the days leading up to the return of Jesus: people will be lovers of **self**, lovers of **money**, lovers of **pleasure**.

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The "*Love of self*" identifies what man's religion will be in the last days: Humanism. People think that human ability can solve any problems.

The "*Love of money*" identifies who man's God will be in the last days: the things of this world which is Materialism. Carl Sagan put this into words when he said, "the cosmos is all there is, was, or ever will be."

The "*Love of pleasure*" identifies man's lifestyle in the last days which is Hedonism. The pursuit of happiness has become the primary purpose people see for living in these last days.

2 Timothy 3:1 has the payoff for loving all these substitutes for God, it is difficult times or perilous times as it says in the NKJV. And this results in Nihilism which is the doctrine that nothing exists, or is knowable, or can be communicated:

In other words, Despair sets in when you pursue loving things instead of what we were made to do, loving God.

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In the very next verse Paul reveals the fundamental reason for the disintegration of society in the end times. He says people will "*hold to a form of religion, although they will deny its power.*"

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The Clear Message from 2 Timothy 3:1-5 is that we should expect to see increasing secularism and paganism as we approach the end of the Church Age.

An Important Point to emphasize that just because the Bible prophesies the decay of society, this does not mean that we should sit idly by and do nothing. We are called to be salt and light which means our being part of society should help slow the rate of decay.

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Understanding Bible prophecy will help Christians respond appropriately to the two greatest challenges of the 21st Century: (1) The Decay of Society and (2) the Growing Apostasy in the Church

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Let's take a look at the Growing Apostasy in the Church. Apostasy is the falling away from the faith that is prophesied to happen before Jesus returns.

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The Bible clearly prophesies that as we approach the end of the Church Age there will be increasing heresy and apostasy in the Church:

2 Thessalonians 2:3 says that Jesus comes back after a time when people fall away from the historic Christian faith.

In Matthew 24:11, Jesus warns us that false prophets will be deceiving people prior to His return.

Revelation 3:14-22 describes what the Christendom will be like at the end of the Church Age: it will be like the Laodicean church, luke-warm in its relationship to the Lord.

2 Timothy 3:5 says that people will have *"a form of godliness"* which means a religion that will look good to men but without the power that comes from having a genuine relationship with God. Religion has led more people away from a personal relationship with Christ than anything else in this world.

1 Timothy 4:1 says, *"that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons."* People will not be getting truth from God, they'll be buying-into the lies of the devil.

And 2 Timothy 3:13 says that society will grow worse as we get closer to the return of the Lord.

2 Timothy 4:3 tells us that people will demand preachers that tell them what they want to hear in the last days...

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"The time will come when people will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths." People would rather hear things that tell them "I'm OK, you're OK" than the honest truth about themselves.

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There are numerous examples of the apostasy of the church. For example, the Episcopal Church has leaders who are now denying fundamental beliefs that makes Christians Christians. Bishop Spong denies the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, sinless life, the atonement of sins by His death on the cross, and His resurrection yet he still considers himself a Christian.

Effectively he is advocating Christianity without Christ.

Forgiveness without Repentance

Salvation without regeneration

And Heaven without Hell

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Bible prophecy helps us to understand what is really going on in the Middle East.

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Before the 20th Century the people of Israel were denied a homeland and dispersed throughout all the nations of the world...

This worldwide dispersion was prophesied in Deuteronomy 28:64...

"The Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you will serve other gods of wood and stone which you or your fathers have not known." Note also that that would turn away from God and fall into the idol worship that characterized the societies they were mixed with. Idolatry is worshipping anything other than God.

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Besides worldwide Dispersion, Deuteronomy 28:65-67 says that the people of Israel would be persecuted everywhere they went...

"And among those nations [where they will be dispersed] you shall find no rest . . . But there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. So your life shall hang in doubt before you."

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So Before the 20th Century, Jews have had worldwide Dispersion, Persecution everywhere, and the third thing is:

That their homeland would become desolate, like a desert...

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Deuteronomy 29:22-23 says, *“Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the Lord has afflicted it, will say, All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive...”* This certainly came to pass. Mark Twain visited the land of Israel in the 1860 and wrote in his book, *“Innocents Abroad”* that the land was a barren wasteland with no trees. It was a place where no one wanted to live until the Jews returned.

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A fourth prophecy about the Jews...

Is that the people of Israel would be restored to their land from their worldwide dispersion just prior to the Lord's return...

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Deuteronomy 30:3-4 says, *“The Lord your God will restore you from captivity and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.”*

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Since the 20th Century, we have witnessed the re-gathering of the people of Israel as prophesied in Isaiah 11:10-12...

“Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will regather you a second time, with His hand, the remnant of His people who remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea... He will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the world.”

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We know that this prophesied re-gathering of Israel is not talking about their return from Babylonian captivity because this passage says that their re-gathering would be the *“second time.”* Also, it lists a number of nations from where they will come. The *“islands of the sea”* is a reference to the nations of the world because sea is often symbolic of the sea of nations. And it reinforces this very clearly by saying they will come from *“the four corners of the world.”*

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In addition to the re-gathering of the people since the 20th Century,

We have also seen the re-establishment of the state of Israel as prophesied in Isaiah 66:7-8, *“Before she was in labor, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children.”*

We have also seen the reclamation of the land as prophesied in Ezekiel 36:34-35:

“And they [the visitor to the land in the end times] will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate, and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’”

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A fourth fulfillment of prophecy we've seen in Israel since the 20th Century...

Is the revival of the Hebrew language as prophesied in Zephaniah 3:9, *“For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord.”* Since people had been dispersed into other nations, the Hebrew language became like Latin, it was lost as a spoken language and was only used by scholars to study Scripture. But with people coming back to the land from many different countries, a common language was needed so that people could talk to each other.

We've also seen Resurgence of the military as prophesied in Zechariah 12:6, *“In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place-- Jerusalem.”*

And we've seen the re-occupation of Jerusalem by Israel as prophesied in Luke 21:24...

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“They [the Jews] will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

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A seventh fulfillment of prophecy we've seen in Israel since the 20th Century...

Is the re-focusing of world politics on the Mid-East peace process as prophesied in Zechariah 12:2-3...

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“Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around... And it will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.”

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So you are probably wondering why God would put the Jew through all the dispersion and persecution that they’ve experienced throughout history. The relationship between God’s chosen people Israel and God is a type of the relationship between believers and God. Romans Chapters 9-11 makes it clear that God is allowing the Jews to go through the Diaspora and the persecutions to bring them to the end of themselves so that they will repent and put their faith in Yeshua as their Messiah. The result will be the salvation of a great remnant of the nation of Israel.

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So how does this relate to us? How does studying about the nation of Israel help us to understand where we are in the course of history? Israel is God’s prophetic time-clock. As we see prophecies regarding Israel being fulfilled, we can better understand our time in history.

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It is a fact that Bible prophecy is the key to understanding where we stand in God’s plan for the Ages.

A Crucial Point about this fact is that the Bible says we cannot know the date of the Lord’s return, but we are given enough information that can know the season.

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For example, Jesus said in Matthew 24:33 that when, *“we see all these things”* we can recognize that *“He is near, right at the door.”*

Hebrews 10:25 says, *“we are not to forsake the assembling of the saints as we “see the day drawing near.”* What day? Hebrews 10:27 makes it clear that this day is the day of judgment when Jesus returns.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 Paul tells us that the coming of the Lord will be like, *“a thief in the night,”* but this is not for believers, who are *“children of light.”*

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Jesus commanded us to watch, what are we to watch for to know we are in the season of His return?

He gave us signs of nature like earthquakes and bad weather patterns that indicate His return is near.

There are signs in the decay of society that indicate He is coming soon.

As we near the return of Jesus there are positive spiritual signs in that a great many people we become saved.

But there are also the negative spiritual signs, namely the apostasy of the Church.

Certain key developments in technology is a sign that the stage is set for the Lord to return. Many end-time Bible prophecies may be fulfilled by mankind’s action without supernatural intervention by God. I’ll give you some examples of this in a minute...

The Bible prophecies that all the world will come together under the Antichrist. So if we are close to the Lord’s return, we should see the stage being set for the man who would rule the world to come on the scene.

And of course there is God’s prophetic time-clock, the signs related to the nation of Israel.

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Prior to our modern day, Christians had to interpret many prophecies that God would have to act supernaturally to fulfill many of the prophecies. For example, it is easy to see the role that nuclear weapons could play in bringing about the magnitude of the slaughter that will take place during the Great Tribulation.

The book of Revelation prophesies that a 200 million-man Asian army will attack the Middle-East. When the Apostle John wrote that passage, there wasn’t 200 million men in the whole world. Today, this happens to be the number of men China has in its Army.

The book of Revelation also prophesies that all the world will see the bodies of the two prophets God sent to Jerusalem who could not be killed by anyone but the Antichrist himself. It is easy to understand how this could happen today in the age of CNN. Prior to satellite communications, we just had to take it on faith that God would supernaturally make that possible.

We have computer-generated 3-D animation today that will probably be used to fulfill the prophecy of the Antichrist’s image being automated.

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So, in conclusion, Bible prophecy provides understanding about the times we live in, it gives us assurance that God is in control, and hope for the glorious future that God has for His children

For example...

There is no reason to worry about the fate of Israel, Amos 9:15 says, *"I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.*"

And there is no reason to worry about the triumph of evil, Psalm 2:1-6 says, *"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion."*"

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God, is real, Heaven is real, and the promises He has made is real... Revelation 5:8-10 says, *"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."*"

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You can bet your life that Jesus is returning in power and glory to bring peace, righteousness, and justice to this world.

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MARANATHA! Which means, come soon Lord Jesus!