

2Peter 1:16-21

Safety; Walking in the Light of Prophecy

Have you noticed there is a polarizing difference between the way some Christians interpret the significance of world events and the way others interpret them?

For example, we tend to be divided between either viewing this current crisis as primarily a health crisis that we trust our health care professionals and our government to guide us through, and when they do we can all get back to normal.

Or we tend to view this crisis as a cover for the outworking of a global agenda to take control, and there will be no return to life as it once was.

One of the primary determining factors for which side you will take on these contrasting views of world events is how do you view Bible prophecy?

Do you view it as relatively unimportant and irrelevant for us today, or as very important and highly relevant for our modern lives?

2Peter 1:21, "... prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Our passage that we are studying today ends with this strong declaration that, like the rest of inspired scripture, Bible prophecy is inspired of God and is therefore the word of God.

And like all scripture, prophecy is useful for rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2Timothy 3:16-17)

2Peter 1:16, "For we [Peter and the other apostles] did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming [the Greek word is Parousia, meaning the second coming, (Gene Green, p. 219)] of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

Here, Peter indicates that he and the other apostles had taught the churches about the second coming of Jesus Christ—"we made known to you the power and coming." They taught the churches the prophecies in the Bible about the end times.

I point this out simply because most churches today do not teach what Bible prophecy says about the last days and the future return of Jesus Christ. But Peter and the other apostles did teach Bible prophecy to their churches.

Many do not believe that prophecy has all been fulfilled and is therefore no longer relevant. Or they simply don't understand it, so they avoid it.

But as we are going to see today, Bible prophecy is of great importance to the church, especially today.

Paul, one of the other apostles, also reminded the Thessalonian Christians what he had taught them in the early days of their Christian faith:

1Thessalonians 5:1-2, “*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*”

And again, in his second letter to them, he is writing about the rapture of the church and the revealing of the antichrist, and he says these words in *2Thessalonians 2:5*:

“*Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?*”

The apostles of Jesus knew that it was important to teach the churches the prophecies about the last days. Therefore, it is important for us also to get to know these things.

Think about when they were teaching end time prophecy—2,000 years ago. Why would it be important to God that these believers be taught the prophecies of the second coming of Christ when God knew that fulfillment of these prophecies was still at least 2,000 years away?

Obviously, there is something fundamentally important for all believers about understanding prophecy, even if you may not experience its fulfillment before you pass away.

A solid understanding of the Bible's teaching about the end time greatly impacts the way we live our lives, and it changes the way we view the world we live in.

It teaches us to recognize that this world is not our home, and therefore to not cling to the things of this world.

Knowing Bible prophecy helps us to live with a Pilgrim mentality, it makes it easier to live simply, to travel lightly, and to invest our resources into the mission, because soon we will be going home.

The words, *power* and *coming*, in verse six, “*The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” are words that are used often in the New Testament to describe the return of Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation, to bring judgment upon the nations of the world.

When Jesus came the first time He came quietly and humbly—think of the Christmas story.

But when He comes again there will be nothing quiet, gentle or lowly about His coming. As we saw in our study of Zechariah, the whole earth will shake, as He comes in amazing power, like this world has never experienced before.

Matthew 24:29-30, *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ³⁰ Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory...”*

When Peter taught about the second coming of Jesus Christ, I’m sure he must have taught with great conviction and passion.

I say this because of what Peter writes next. As a young man, following Jesus as one of the twelve disciples, Peter, along with James and John, had witnessed something with their own eyes that radically impacted their understanding of Jesus, severed their attachment to this world, and fueled a zealous expectation for the kingdom that Jesus would establish on earth.

Peter ends verse 16 with these words, *“[we] were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”*

2Peter 1:17-18, *“For He [Jesus] 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...”*

According to the opening words of verse 19, the event that Peter is describing here was supernatural confirmation assuring these three apostles that all the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies foretelling the coming of a supremely powerful King, known as the Messiah, were true.

The historic event Peter is describing here is what is known as the transfiguration of Jesus.

Let’s read the record of this event that Peter is talking about. The transfiguration that takes place here is a foretaste, and brief revealing, of who Jesus really was inside that human flesh.

It is the demonstration that He was actually awesome, almighty God, the promised majestic Messiah who would one day come in power and glory.

But, except for this one occasion, for the 33 years that He lived on earth during His first coming, Jesus, though always God, was disguised as a mere man.

Matthew 16:27-17:7, Jesus is speaking to His disciples, telling them that there is coming a day in the future when He will come to set up God’s kingdom on earth.

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. ²⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

^{17:1} Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ² and He was transfigured before them.

[Transfigured, means his outward expression changed as His inward being shone through and was seen. (Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies*)]

“His face shone like the sun [imagine trying to look into the sun—His face was so bright it hurt to look at Him], and His clothes became as white as the light. ³ And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

⁴ 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.”

⁵ 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!”

⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.”

Many of the prophecies of the Old Testament had predicted that a powerful king, known as the Messiah, would come and bring judgment against all the nations of the world, and then set up His throne in Jerusalem and rule with power and righteousness over all the nations of the world, and that He would restore this fallen creation back to the paradise it had been in the beginning.

But what kind of a man could accomplish that? And as they watched Jesus in His ministry, I’m sure the disciples must have thought, “Jesus is amazing, but He is so humble and low-key, not really the image that the prophecies painted of the Messiah.”

They were probably not sure that He was quite up to the task.

But when Jesus was transfigured before their eyes on this mountain, it confirmed that hidden beneath that humble human flesh was the most powerful being in existence—more than capable of conquering and ruling the world in righteousness.

Let’s take a closer look at some of the details Peter describes of that incident, because they are significant.

In **verse 17**, the voice that came out of that blazing white cloud—the voice of God the Father, was connecting what they were witnessing with some of the great prophecies when He said, ***“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”***

God was, with this introduction, identifying Jesus with two great Messianic prophecies: Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42. God was declaring Jesus to be the promised Messiah, the King above all kings who would judge and rule the world.

Psalm 2:6-9, “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.”⁷ “I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, **‘You are My Son.** [This is My beloved Son] today I have begotten You.⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’”

Isaiah 42:1-4, “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One **in whom My soul delights!** [in whom I am well pleased] I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.² He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.³ A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth.⁴ He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands [the furthest parts of the earth] shall wait for His law.”

Let’s read our text again, **2Peter 1:17-18**, “For He [Jesus] 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...”

Now nobody could ever make them doubt that there was a Messiah—a King of kings, and they knew He was going to set up His kingdom.

All the prophecies about Him were now absolutely certain in the apostle’s minds because they had seen the King in His glory, and they had heard the voice of God identify Jesus as the one spoken of in the prophecies.

2Peter 1:19, “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...”

Therefore, you do well to heed, meaning it will be beneficial to you to pay close attention to the prophetic word—trust that it is given to us by God for our good.

Proverbs 4 describes what it means to heed the word of God.

Proverbs 4:20-22, “My son, give attention to [heed] my words; Incline your ear to my sayings [lean closer so you don’t miss anything that is said].²¹ Do not let them depart from your eyes [spend much time studying them]; Keep them in the midst of your heart [learn them so that you know them well];²² For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.”

Bible prophecies are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh—you do well to pay attention to them.

Some of you have allowed false teachers, and unbiblical sensationalists with their wild speculations to turn you off of Bible prophecy. That is the work of the enemy to discredit God's word.

Ignore them, especially those who major on trying to determine the timing of the rapture. Ignore those who are making unverifiable speculations about names, places and dates.

There are lots of very good, solid prophecy teachers out there. Find them, and learn from them.

When rightly interpreted, like all the rest of the Bible, prophecy is given for our benefit and blessing.

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

Notice that verse 19 describes prophecy as a light that shines in a dark place. In the Bible darkness is a metaphor for evil environments or places of unbelief, or demonic influences.

Just like the rest of scripture. **Psalm 119:105**, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”*

All of God's word, including prophecy, helps us find our way when walking in a dark world full of evil, lies, danger and deception.

We study prophecy to help us know how to live in this world, and to help us make wise decisions that can steer us clear of enemy traps and ambushes.

We are living in a day in which massive amounts of prophesied events are beginning to unfold all around us. Many dangers are also developing that prophecy warns us to watch out for.

There has perhaps never before in human history been a time when prophecy was so relevant for guidance as it is today.

If you do not study prophecy, if you tend to ignore it, then you are missing out on almost 1/3 of God's guidance meant to help you navigate life—that is a huge blind spot.

We are walking in increasing darkness, but scripture is a lamp leading us. As long as we stick close to scripture we will walk safely. What happens if you wander away from the one carrying the lamp? If we neglect, or distrust scripture, we will be engulfed in darkness. (*Michael Green, p. 100*)

Let me give you an example of a group of Christians whose lives were spared because they believed and obeyed the warnings of Bible prophecy. The prophecy that they took seriously and obeyed was one that Jesus gave in Luke chapter 21.

Luke 21:20-24, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. ²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. ²² For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. ²⁴ And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

There was a large church in Jerusalem during the early history of the church following the resurrection of Christ.

In the year A.D. 66, the first Jewish revolt broke out against the Romans who were occupying Israel. When the revolt first began, the Roman general in the land, Cestus Gallus, came with his armies from Caesarea and surrounded Jerusalem.

The surrounding of the city marked the sign that Jesus had prophesied, and the Jewish believers knew that Jerusalem would soon be destroyed.

Jesus had warned the Jews to desert the city when they saw this happening.

Every Christian fled from the city, crossed the Jordan River and set up a new community of Jewish believers in the town of Pella on the east side of the Jordan. There they waited for the prophecy of Jesus to be fulfilled.

However, Cestus Gallus soon withdrew his troops from Jerusalem and it seemed that Jesus' prophecy had been wrong. But part of His warning was that once that sign had come those who are in the country were not to return and enter the city.

And sure enough, without warning, two years later, in A.D. 68, a new Roman general by the name of Vespasian and his son, Titus, again suddenly besieged the city, and this time no one could escape.

The city remained under siege for two years and most of the population of Jerusalem starved to death before the Romans broke through the city walls in A.D. 70 and slaughtered most of those who were still alive, and only a few survivors were led away captive. The city and the Temple were destroyed.

Altogether, hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed in this siege, but not one Jewish Christian died, because they obeyed the prophetic warning of Jesus. (*Fruchtenbaum, "Footsteps of the Messiah" p. 630; Hughes, "Luke" p. 301*)

How seriously should we then take the Lord's prophetic warnings about the days in which we are living?

We need to carefully study the prophetic signs so that we can tell the difference between what the Bible actually teaches and what the false prophets and false teachers are saying—for there are many false teachers, especially it seems when it comes to prophecy.

Always check their message with scripture, and read it in its context, because false teachers use the Bible, but they twist its meaning and use it out of context.

We need to get to know our Bible and we need to trust our Bible—all of it, including prophecy.

In these days of so much deception and false teaching we need to get into this book and learn it like never before. Our lives depend upon it.

2Peter 1:19, "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..."

How long is Bible prophecy a valid guide for our lives? Until the day dawns and the morning star rises.

Both the dawning of the day, and the rising of the morning star, are metaphorical references to the second coming of Jesus Christ when He sets up His Kingdom on earth, the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. (Malachi 4:2; Numbers 24:17)

2Peter 1:20-21, "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."

Private interpretation means coming up with a unique interpretation that does not harmonize with the rest of the teaching of the Bible, and probably no one else has ever thought of it before, because it is from your imagination, not from the Bible.

It is part of God's word, so it must be interpreted by the rest of God's word, and the interpretation must agree with the rest of the Bible.

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

Bible prophecy is part of the inspired word of God. All of it came from the mind of God. Therefore, none of it is to be rejected as unimportant.

Bible prophecy is a vital part of God's word and it is part of God's relevant counsel for us today. By taking it seriously we will have a better understanding of world events and of how to live in this environment.

If we neglect Bible prophecy, there will be significant areas of blindness and inability to accurately assess and respond to our world around us, which will likely result in some unwise decisions and potential harm to our lives.

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