

11. The Bible and Prophecy (2Q 2020—How to Interpret Scripture)

Biblical Material: Dan. 2:27–45, John 14:29, Num. 14:34, Dan. 7:1–25, Dan. 8:14, 1 Cor. 10:1–13.

Quotes

- When the plain sense of prophecy makes sense, beware your own bias and seek the genre sense. Take every word at its primary, extraordinary, symbolic meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and historical facts, indicate clearly otherwise. *Brian Godawa*
- The design of predictive prophecy was to establish the credibility of God and, ultimately, the authenticity of his sacred Scriptures. *Wayne Jackson*
- History traces the transactions of time. And “time” has been compassed again and again in Bible prophecy, portraying the transcendent developments in the carrying out of God’s great redemptive provisions of the divine plan of the ages. *L.E. Froom*
- In the seventh chapter of Daniel we have one of the most remarkable prophecies of the Bible. It presents a chain of prophecy covering the principal kingdoms of the world for nearly 2,000 years. *G.I. Butler*
- Fellow Christian, where is your influence? Is it on the side of the Bible, its morality, its teachings, its prophecies? *R. F. Cottrell*
- Britain’s departure from Europe is a geopolitically significant event. But did you know Bible prophecy said it would happen? *David Vejlil*

Questions

Why has the prophetic element been so attractive to our church? Are there dangers in overemphasizing prophecy? What is the primary purpose of prophecy? How does the Bible use prophecy to demonstrate the Great Controversy and its final conclusion? What did Jesus say about the purpose behind revealing future events?

Bible summary

Dan. 2:27–45 gives Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the metal statue, along with the understanding that this refers to successive historical kingdoms. Jesus explains he’s telling his disciples what will happen beforehand so they will believe (John 14:29). Num. 14:34 references a year for a day. Dan. 7:1–25 is the prophecy of the four beasts. “For two thousand three hundred evenings and morning, then the sanctuary will be cleansed.” (Dan. 8:14 FBV). Paul outlines Israel’s history (1 Cor. 10:1–13).

Comment

Fulfilled prophecy fulfills a useful purpose as a confirmatory validation of Scripture, and has helped many to have confidence in other aspects of the Bible. Yet Bible prophecy is not limited to predicting the future, and in fact is only a minor part of the primary message of the prophets. Most of the Old Testament prophets were dealing with contemporary situations, and giving God’s instructions as to how to live at that time.

That said these prophetic messages also contain timeless principles we should pay attention to. The Bible reveals how much God is involved in the lives of his people, wanting them to experience the very best. This meant encouraging good actions, and warning against sin and

evil. Just like a good parent, God spoke through the prophets to help his children become the best they could be. Sadly those prophets were often ignored or opposed.

But in this week's study, we are mainly looking at prophecy in terms of explaining what is to come in the future. Jesus told his disciples that he did this so they would be convinced and believe. That is a fundamental aspect we must not miss. Future prophecy is not about satisfying our curiosity. It is to prepare us and to convince us.

The prophecies found in the book of Daniel point us to the unfolding of history and what the future holds. In accurately predicting the death of the Messiah, these prophecies have been effective in encouraging belief in Jesus. The beast and other aspects have tended to encourage some to sensationalism, but they were designed to demonstrate that God is still in control of events on Planet Earth. The elements of classical prophecy in the Bible are often conditional—if you do this, then this will happen, if you don't, then that will happen. Apocalyptic prophecy in contrast is saying that the future is not conditional—God will carry out what he says whatever our response.

So what do we conclude? That God will eventually bring everything to a conclusion—this world will not continue like this forever. In the end truth will reign, and goodness will triumph. As we look at the rise and fall of kingdoms and nations, we can be sure that God knows all this already, and that his plans and purposes will be fulfilled. Most of all, his character of goodness and right will be vindicated and the issues raised in the Great Controversy will be answered.

Ellen White comments

In the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end. Here is the complement of the book of Daniel. One is a prophecy; the other a revelation. The book that was sealed is not the Revelation, but that portion of the prophecy of Daniel relating to the last days. {AA 585}

Let all who have cultivated a love for light reading, now turn their attention to the sure word of prophecy. Take your Bibles, and begin to study with fresh interest the sacred records of the Old and New Testaments. The oftener and more diligently you study the Bible, the more beautiful will it appear, and the less relish you will have for light reading. Bind this precious volume to your hearts. It will be to you a friend and guide. 245 {CCh 171}

Every child of God should be intelligent in the Scriptures, and able, by tracing the fulfillment of prophecy, to show our position in this world's history. The Bible was written for the common people as well as for scholars, and is within the comprehension of all. The great truths which underlie man's duty to his fellow men and to his Maker are clearly revealed; and those who really want the truth need make no mistake. The way is not left in uncertainty, as though we were standing where four roads met, not knowing which one to take. The truth is our guide; it is to us like a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. {CSW 23}

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme-- of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for the supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. {CT 462}