

Lesson 31 – Introduction to Bible Prophecy

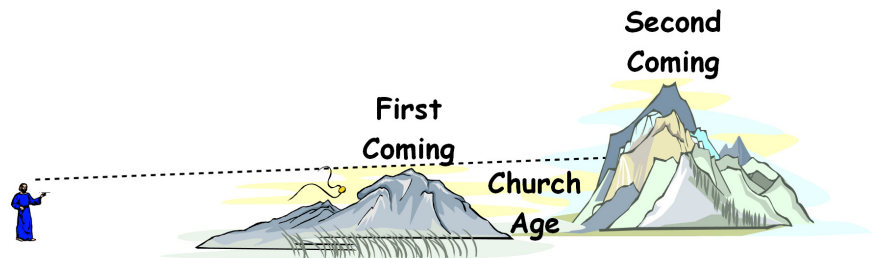
In Acts 17, Paul started the church in the city of Thessalonica. He was only there for three weeks before he had to flee the city or be killed. During that three weeks he founded the church and began to ground the new believers in the truths of the Word of God. One of the things he taught them was Bible prophecy (2 Thess. 2:5). If it is so important that it should be taught to new believers in the first three weeks they are Christians, it is important for us to study and teach.

1. The Importance of Bible Prophecy

- a. The emphasis the Bible places on prophecy concerning the last days
 - i. The Second Coming of Christ is mentioned 1,527 times in the Old Testament
 - ii. In the New Testament, 1 out of 25 verses speaks of the Lord’s Second Coming. That is 319 verses.¹
- b. The purpose of Bible prophecy
 - i. To show God’s final triumph over the forces of evil.
 - ii. To encourage God’s people when they are going through trials.
 - iii. To reassure God’s people that He is in control of His world when it sometimes seems to appear that He isn’t.
 - iv. To demonstrate God’s faithfulness to His promises, especially as they pertain to Israel.
 - v. To motivate us to be serious about living for God, for “. . . of that day and hour no one knows.” – Matt. 24:36
- c. The focus of Bible prophecy
 - i. Jesus – Rev. 19:10
 - ii. Israel

2. Jesus in Bible Prophecy

- a. The Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord did not distinguish between His first and second comings.



The Old Testament Prophet's View

- b. The church was not mentioned in the Old Testament. The New Testament calls it “a Mystery” – Eph. 3:3-6
- c. It is as if the Old Testament prophets were looking at two mountains – one in front of another – separated by a valley. The two mountains appear to merge together, and the valley is not visible from that angle.

3. Major opinions concerning Bible Prophecy

- a. Concerning the Millennium
 - i. Premillennialism
 1. Jesus will come again to earth
 2. Then He will set up His Kingdom and rule the earth for 1,000 years in Israel.

¹ René Pache, *The Return of Jesus Christ*, Moody Press, 1955

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3. The church age is not the millennium.
 4. The church is not Israel, and Israel is not the church.
 5. This view comes from a literal interpretation of the Bible.
 6. Most early Christian writers and “church fathers” taught Premillennialism.
- ii. Postmillennialism
1. The church will prepare the world for the Millennium through spreading good will and teaching the message of Christ.
 2. As a result, the church will usher in the Millennium.
 3. After this golden age of peace and harmony for 1,000 years, Jesus will return.
 4. This view became popular between 1880 and the early 1900’s when it appeared that the world was becoming more and more Christian.
 - a. During the 1890’s, 75% of Americans were members of churches that preached the Gospel.
 - b. Theological liberalism had not yet overrun the vast majority of American Protestant churches.
 - c. Many Christians in America thought the Millennium would begin sometime during the 20th Century.
 - d. Theodore Roosevelt during that time made the statement that “good Christians make good citizens.” Large segments of the US population agreed.
 5. One of the great missionary hymns we used to sing was written during that era – expressing the postmillennial viewpoint:

We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations

*We’ve a story to tell to the nations,
That shall turn their hearts to the right,
A story of truth and mercy,
A story of peace and light,
A story of peace and light.*

*For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
And the dawning to noonday bright,
And Christ’s great kingdom shall come on earth,
The kingdom of love and light.*

6. World War I caused most postmillennialists to rethink their position and many became amillennialists.
- iii. Amillennialism
1. There is no literal 1,000 year millennial reign of Christ.
 2. The reference to 1,000 years is figurative.
 3. The millennium refers to the church age, and Jesus is ruling now through His church.
 - a. Catholics think the Old Testament promises to Israel apply to their church.

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- b. Liberal Protestants and liberal Baptists don't believe in the millennium because they don't believe the Bible.
 - c. Conservative Protestants and Baptists think the Old Testament promises to Israel apply to the universal church.
 - d. Conservatives and some liberals believe Jesus is coming again, but there won't be a millennium.
4. This view comes from a non-literal interpretation of the Bible.
 5. Preterism is a form of Amillennialism that teaches that the prophecies of the Bible have already been fulfilled, so we don't have to look for future events in the Bible. Hank Hanegraaf, the broadcaster on Christian radio who calls himself "The Bible Answer Man," teaches this opinion on his radio program.
- b. The reason why most Christians are Premillennialists
 - i. We believe God intends to faithfully keep all the promises he made to Israel.
 - ii. We believe that God said what He meant, and He meant what He said.
 - iii. We know that many of those promises have never been fulfilled.
 - iv. Since God fulfills His promises, and since these promises have never been fulfilled, we believe He will fulfill them in the future.
4. The Covenants of God – See chart
God made a number of covenants (agreements, or contracts) with man. Four of those covenants have prophetic significance: Every one of these Covenants was a Covenant with the Jews, not with the church.
 - a. The Abrahamic Covenant
 - b. The Palestinian Covenant
 - c. The Davidic Covenant
 - d. The New Covenant
 5. A brief outline of things to come
 - a. The Rapture of all Christians – 1 Thess. 4:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-53
 - i. Jesus will come to the clouds of the air (NOT to the earth – not yet)
 - ii. The dead in Christ will rise first
 - iii. We who are alive and remain will be taken up
 - b. The Judgment Seat of Christ – 1 Cor. 3:9-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10
 - i. This judgment is not to determine whether or not we get to Heaven. That was settled at Calvary.
 - ii. This is a judgment for rewarding us for faithful Christian living and service.

The Golden Rule of Bible Interpretation

When the PLAIN SENSE of Scripture makes COMMON SENSE, SEEK NO OTHER SENSE. Therefore, take EVERY WORD at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, UNLESS the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages, and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate CLEARLY otherwise. God, in revealing His Word, neither intends nor permits the reader to be confused. He wants His children to understand. –
Author Unknown

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- c. The Marriage of the Lamb – Rev. 19:6-8
 - i. The Location – Heaven
 - ii. The Bridegroom – Jesus
 - iii. The Bride – the Church
- d. The Tribulation Period (during the marriage of the Lamb)
 - i. The Tribulation will start shortly after the Rapture
 - ii. The Tribulation – first 3½ years
 - 1. The rise of the Roman Empire
 - 2. The rise of the antichrist and the false prophet
 - iii. The Great Tribulation – second 3½ years
- e. The Second Coming of Jesus to Earth
- f. The Millennium
- g. The final revolt of Satan
- h. The Great White Throne Judgment – Rev. 20
 - i. This is not to determine who will go to Heaven and who will go to Hell
 - ii. This is the sentencing of all the unsaved to eternity in Hell
 - iii. No Christians will be judged at this judgment, since Christ took our sentence for us, and we are in Him.
- i. Destruction of the Earth
- j. The Creation of a New Heaven and Earth – Rev. 21:1
- k. Eternity

Covenants with Prophetic Significance

Covenant	Provisions	Duration	Conditional?	Fulfilled?	Prophetic Significance
Abrahamic Covenant Gen. 12:1-3	God promised Abraham: 1. He will become the father of a great nation – 12:2 2. He will have God's blessing on his life – 12:2 3. God will make his name great – 12:2 4. God will make Abraham to be a blessing – 12:2 5. God will bless those who bless Abraham – 12:3 6. God will curse those who curse Abraham – 12:3 7. Through Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed (the Messiah will come through Abraham's chosen seed) – 12:3	Eternal	No		Since this covenant has not been totally fulfilled, God must either fulfill it in the future or go back on His Word.
Palestinian Covenant Deut. 30:1-10	1. Israel will be removed from the land for disobedience 0 Deut. 28:62-68 2. Israel will repent at a future date – Deut. 23:63-68; 30:1-3 3. Messiah will return – Deut. 30:3-6 4. Israel will be restored to the land – Deut. 30:5 5. Israel will be converted to Christ as a nation. – Deut. 30:4-8; Rom. 11:26-27 6. Israel's enemies will face judgment – Deut. 30:7 7. Israel will then receive the full blessing promised.	Eternal	No	Partial, so far	Since most of this covenant has not been fulfilled, God must either fulfill it in the future or go back on His Word.
Davidic Covenant 2 Sam. 7:8-17	1. David will have a son to succeed him 2. Solomon, the son, will build the Temple in Jerusalem 3. The throne of the Kingdom will be established forever 4. The throne will not be taken from Solomon (even though he deserved it later). 5. David's house, throne and kingdom shall be forever.	Eternal	Dis-obedience will bring chastisement but will not annul the covenant.	Not completely	The "forever" clause of this covenant is only partially fulfilled.
New Covenant Jer. 31:31-34; Isa. 61:8-9	1. The restoration of Israel to the favor of God through national conversion and the forgiveness of sins – 2. The Holy Spirit will be given to Israel 3. The Temple sanctuary will be rebuilt in Jerusalem – Ezek. 37:26-27a 4. Israel will be at peace – no more war – Hos. 2:18; Isa. 2:4 5. Israel will be respected among the nations 6. Israel will be one nation again with one King – Jesus 7. Israel will dwell in their land forever after they have been regathered. 8. God will be with them. 9. All the Gentile nations will know Israel is blessed by God.	Until the end	No	No	A careful study of Bible prophecy will reveal that this Covenant has not been fulfilled during this age.