**Why Study Biblical Prophecy?**

Revelation 1:1-3; 22:7

Why study prophecy? Does prophecy really matter? What is the point of studying something that is far off into the future and we probably won’t be around for? Can we even trust prophecy to be true and accurate?

**Some people might ignore or minimize prophecy (study of) because they think …**

* It lacks relevance or importance in our lives
* It is secondary, at best, to other fundamental doctrines of Scripture (an add on, optional doctrine)
* It is too complicated and difficult to understand

**Daniel 12:8** And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?

* It is too contradictory and diverse in its competing interpretations – not that important anyway so why fight about it

**Why NOT to study prophecy:**

* As merely a curiosity or an intellectual pursuit
* As a means to distract us from personal reflection or to avoid obedience in practical daily living
* In an attempt to identify specific groups, individuals, events, dates, etc.
* To promote conspiracy theories, speculations, opinions as authoritative

Why should we study biblical prophecy?

1. **Prophecy is a significant portion of God’s revelation to us contained in the Scriptures**

**Revelation 1:1-3** The **Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave** unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel **unto his servant John**: (2) **Who bare record** of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. (3) Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the **words of this prophecy**, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

**Revelation 22:7** Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the **prophecy of this book**.

* We have an entire book given to us which prophesies about things to come from and concerning Jesus Christ
* It is estimated that ONE-FOURTH of the Bible was prophetic when it was written3
* All of Scripture is profitable for us and our use

**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: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

* God alone has planned the end from the beginning

**Isaiah 46:9-11** Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, (10) Declaring the **end from the beginning**, and from ancient times **the things that are not yet done**, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (11) Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

* God has chosen to reveal some of that plan in the Scriptures - none of which is unimportant, trivial, or optional

**Acts 20:20** And how I **kept back nothing** that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,

**Acts 20:25** And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone **preaching the kingdom of God**, shall see my face no more.

**Acts 20:27** For I have not shunned to declare unto you **all the counsel of God**.

Consider these statistics according to Richard Mayhue1

* 62 of 66 biblical books contain predictive information (exceptions are Ruth, Solomon, Philemon, and 3 John)
* 27% of all the verses in the Bible (8,352/31,124) are prophetic in nature
* 22% of those prophetic verses refer to Christ’s second coming (1,245/8,352)
* All 9 NT authors mention Christ’s second coming
* 24 of 27 NT books mention Christ’s second coming (exceptions are Philemon, 2 and 3 John)
* Around 333 specific biblical prophecies dealing with Christ’s two advents of which 1/3 concern His first coming and 2/3 concern His second coming
* Nowhere in Scripture does it give any indication that prophecy is exempt from careful study or should be avoided, minimized, or ignored

**2 Timothy 2:15** Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**

Why should we study biblical prophecy?

1. **God expects us to DO something with the prophecy He has given**

**Revelation 1:3** Blessed is he that **readeth**, and they that **hear** the words of this prophecy, and **keep** those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

**Revelation 22:7** Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that **keepeth** the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

* God expects/commands us to read it – Study it and Teach it
* God expects/commands us to hear it – Understand it and Accept it
* God expects/commands us to keep it – Apply it and Obey it

God commands believers to study and interpret **ALL** of Scripture with care and precision.

**Matthew 28:19-20** Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) **Teaching them to observe all things** whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

**Acts 2:42** And they continued stedfastly **in the apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

**Acts 5:20** Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people **all the words of this life**.

**Acts 20:27** For I have not shunned to declare unto you **all the counsel of God**.

**2 Timothy 2:15** Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**

**1 Peter 1:10-11** Of which salvation the prophets **have enquired and searched diligently**, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: (11) **Searching what, or what manner of time** the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

**Revelation 22:18-19** For I testify unto every man that **heareth the words of the prophecy** of this book, **If any man shall** **add** unto these things, **God shall add** unto him the plagues that are written in this book: (19) And **if any man shall take away** from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God shall take away** his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Why should we study biblical prophecy?

1. **There are many practical and immediate benefits to the study of prophecy**

**Revelation 1:3** **Blessed** is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

**Revelation 22:7** Behold, I come quickly: **blessed** is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

* Fulfilled prophecy gives evidence that the Bible is true and builds our confidence in God’s Word, His power, and His sovereign control over all things including the future

**Acts 13:32-35** And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the **promise** which was made unto the fathers, (33) **God hath fulfilled** the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. (34) And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. (35) Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

* The study of prophecy helps us in refuting those who scoff at the Christian hope – **2 Peter 3:1-9**
* The study of prophecy motivates us to live holy lives

**1 Thessalonians 5:6-9** Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us **watch** and be **sober**. (7) For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. (8) But let us, who are of the day, be **sober**, putting on the **breastplate of faith and love**; and for an **helmet, the hope of salvation**. (9) For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

**Titus 2:11-14** For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, (12) Teaching us that, **denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world**; (13) **Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing** of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; (14) Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

**2 Peter 3:11-13** Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness**, (12) **Looking for** and hasting unto the **coming of the day of God**, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

* The study of prophecy provides answers and hope for other questions and struggles (such as grief)

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-14** (13) But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (see also verses 15-18)

* The study of prophecy helps us to grow in Christ and to purify ourselves

**1 John 3:2-3** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And **every man that hath this hope** in him **purifieth himself**, even as he is pure.

* Prophecy provides a source of hope, comfort, and encouragement for us

**1 Thessalonians 4:18** Wherefore **comfort one another** with these words.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** Wherefore **comfort yourselves** together, and **edify one another**, even as also ye do.

**Titus 2:13** Looking for that **blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

* The study of prophecy encourages us to be patient in suffering and trials – **James 5:7-11**
* Prophecy assures us that the unjust persecution of the righteous will be avenged by God – **2 Thess. 1:5-10**

**Some concluding thoughts:**

End-time events are the culmination of God’s redemptive plan. The end matters most because it is the purpose for everything God has promised and done to this point. Prophecy is the source of

* ultimate hope and encouragement for the Christian (1 Corinthians 15:58),
* strength for increased godliness (1 John 3:2-3),
* joy that the difficulties of this life will one day end and death will be defeated (1 Corinthians 15:54-55),
* anticipation for a reunion with departed loved ones (1 Thessalonians 4:17),
* and the reality that we will see God face to face (Revelation 22:3-4).

These future events are linked to history, to God’s promises, and to the very character of God, Who is all-powerful and all-knowing. Since God is sovereign, He is in direct control of every detail. Righteousness will prevail, and evil will be defeated. God is in full control of the beginning and the end (Isaiah 46:9-10).

Without biblical prophecy, the biblical story is incomplete, uncertain, and demoralizing. Much is at stake. The end of the story is the whole point of the story!

That is why we should study prophecy!

So, when it comes to biblical prophecy, let us remember **Isaiah 55:10-11**

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: (11) So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

**Some helpful books:**

1Christ’s Prophetic Plan: A Futuristic Premillennial Primer – John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue

2Last Days Handbook – Robert Lightner

3Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology – J. Dwight Pentecost

Questions?