

Looking Through the Veil

A study in Biblical Prophecy

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a. Introduction

What are some of the reasons we all use to avoid studying prophecy?

Is an understanding of prophecy important in this modern day? Why?

Since we know our destiny, as Christians, why is it important that we study prophecy?

Why are you in this class? What would you like to walk away with?

Do you believe that an extensive education is necessary to understand what God has for all of us in the words of prophecy?

Can we use a simple guideline to show us a clear path through prophecy, or do you think it will take different routes?

What are some simple steps to help us understand prophecy?

What is the difference between Biblical prophecy and 21st Century predictions and forecasts?

READ Isaiah 28:9-13,

2Timothy 3:16-17,

Hebrews 5:12-14

2. What is Prophecy and what does the word mean?

Literal Definitions and Meanings

PROPHECY	(Noun)	[pro-fe-cee]	Occurs 15 times in the NT Occurs 6 times in the OT
	Hebrew	=	<i>NEB-OO-AH</i>
	Greek	=	<i>PRO-AY-TI-AH</i> Literally meaning a “prediction”
		-or-	
	Hebrew	=	<i>MAS-SAW</i> Literally meaning a “doom” or “burden”
PROPHECY	(Verb)	[pro-fe-si]	Occurs 15 times in the NT Occurs 63 times in the OT
	Hebrew	=	<i>NAW-BAW</i> Literally meaning to speak by inspiration of God
		-or-	
			<i>KHAW-ZAW</i> Literally meaning to have a vision
		-or-	
			<i>NAW-TAF</i> Literally meaning to fall in small droplets

A prophet was often called a “seer” or a “beholder”. “Seer” is translated from the Hebrew word “CHARAH” which can also mean glowing because of heat or because of fire. This is a fitting description for this person. A Seer is not so much an observer of future events as a discerner of God’s Will as it applied to coming events. Prophecy is the telling of the coming of the Will of God. It can be in the form of a warning, which it usually is, or in the form of a parallel to a story or act performed by the prophet. Prophecies are normally not positive in content. God sent prophets to warn the people of the coming judgment because of sin. Prophecies almost always concern judgment.

Can you name one specific group of prophecies that were positive in nature?

There are two conditions that all prophecy falls into...

1. **CONDITIONAL...** These are the in most of the verses that have the “If”, “then” statements in them. (1st Samuel 12:14-15, Exodus 15:26, Jeremiah chapter 4, 18:8-10)

2. **UNCONDITIONAL...** These utterances cannot be altered in any way. They will be fulfilled to the letter regardless of any choices anyone makes. God will see to it that it will happen. Examples include Ezekiel chapter 11, Jeremiah 6:19 and 6:30. Also includes the entire Book of Revelation and all of the hundreds of prophecies about Jesus that are in the NT and the OT.

There are four divisions all prophecies can be placed into...

1. **FULFILLED...** already complete and recorded as historical.

Name at least one Bible prophecy that is like this one: _____

2. **UNFULFILLED...** future events, prerecorded historical statements.

Name at least one Bible prophecy that is like this one: _____

3. **PARTIALLY FULFILLED...** part has occurred and part is yet to occur.

Name at least one Bible prophecy that is like this one: _____

4. **NEAR AND FAR FULFILLMENT...** These are prophecies that have two meanings. They are sometimes called "Types". An example is found in the OT ritual concerning the sacrificial lamb that was killed for the sins of the people by the priest on the altar of God. This lamb was a "type" of the true sacrificial Lamb of God, Jesus Christ Who was sacrificed on the altar of man, the cross. Another example is the statement Jesus made from the cross, "It is finished". The finished work on the cross was the immediate defeat of Satan's work of sin at Christ's death but it is also in his final defeat when he is thrown in the lake of fire.

"Types" have some simple rules that they must pass to be actual types. These rules are:

- The TYPE must have a meaning in its own right.
- There must be a divinely intended connection between the near and far fulfillment in the TYPE.
- All TYPES are predictive of Christ.
- A TYPE images or pre-figures a coming reality rather than just for tell an event.

Name at least two TYPES found in Scripture: _____

Along with the above points, there are three different ways of interpreting prophecy...

1. **SYMBOLICAL...** the images in the prophecy are images of reality. Symbolic prophecies are interpreted by the Bible itself.

Name at least one of these: _____

2. **LITERALLY...** taken just exactly like they are spoken. Literal prophecies are never explained by the Bible, but are meant to mean just what they say.

Name at least one of these: _____

3. **SPIRITUALLY...** reality having an image of spiritual things. Prophecies that are meant to be spiritual in nature should be revealed by God's Spirit, the real Authority.

Genesis 2:18-20 with 1st Corinthians 15:20-23

Jonah with Matthew 12:40

- **Conclusion to Section on Meanings:**

To conclude meanings and definitions, certain rules apply when you study prophecies. After you read a prophecy ask yourself about the condition, the type and the interpretation called for. God knows your heart and your desire for the truth. The ultimate resource for an understanding in God's Word is God.

In any prophecy, God always has a specific purpose for what is spoken. Can you name some of these purposes?

We can say that prophecy is the inspired Words of God Himself, which is spoken to those to whom it concerns. It should also be obvious that if we ignore or skip the prophetic sections of our Bibles, we will be missing out on about 28% of it. Prophecy is some of the meat of the Word. Are you ready for it?

3. Study Methods

a. Equipment Needed

First of all, you will need a good study Bible. Study Bibles have center or side column references. These are very useful when you are searching for specific verses or related verses. And when you are studying prophecy, cross-references back and forth to OT and NT are essential. Another handy item to have would be a book called a 'concordance'. This book lists all words in the Bible in alphabetical order showing a portion of the verse they are used in. Other items that are helpful if you can afford them are a good notebook and some different color highlighters or colored pencils. Of course, if you are serious about this, the most essential tool you must have is prayer. Coming to God daily and asking for an understanding of His Word for that day should always be your first step. To get the most out of this study you will probably have to spend at least one hour a week on your own. But this will be an investment that you will not regret. God wants you to know the truth and it is more profitable for you to find it on your own (with His help) than to be taught it.

b. Attitude Needed

Try to stay open minded. The intention of this study is to point you to the truth, not interpret it for you. You will need to discover that on your own. Branch out and dig deep. The things you learn in this study are useful, but the study habits that you will form in the process are even more useful. These habits can be used to study any other subject in the Bible.

Read Psalm 119

4. Getting to Know the Bible Prophets

a. Tests for the Prophet found in the OT

Prophecy was a popular pastime in the ages prior to Christ's first coming (the birth of Jesus). The people of Israel were eager to hear anything that supposedly came for the Mouth of God.... Anything, that is, as long as it contained a blessing or promise of one. Problem was two fold here... first, there were false prophets that tickled the ears of the people with false, but sugar-coated prophecies and second, the true prophet was largely ignored because their warnings were cutting people to the bone. Israel was up to their eyeballs in sin. The core of the message of the true prophet was "repent". This theme is repeated over and over again.

Turn to Deut. 13:1-5 and 18:20-22

What were the two most important tests for the OT prophet?

What kind of attitude did God take towards a false prophet?

Why was the punishment so severe?

b. Examples of Prophets in the Old Testament

Only those called by God were the true prophet. His qualifications looked past the persons background or age or education. The OT prophet was old and young, well-to-do and poor.

What were the requirements of God for a person to allow them to step into the office of prophet?

The office of prophet was seen by the people of the OT day as a very powerful position. As a result, the false prophet would copy the true prophet and claimed to be speaking for God. And, of course, if they prophesied something the people wanted to hear, they were received with open arms. With so many claiming to be speaking for God yet widely disagreeing, confusion and dissention abounded. As a result the leaders of Israel became harder and harder of hearing. They no longer sought after what God was truly saying. Therefore, the true prophet was the one suffering unto death instead of the false prophet.

Read Hebrews 11:32-38...

Summary of OT Prophets

<u>Prophet</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Summary of Message</u>
JOEL	840-830 BC	Visions of the good news and an Ingathering
JONAH	790-770 BC	God's interests in Israel's enemies
AMOS	780-740 BC	David's house will rule the world
HOSEA	760-720 BC	Jehovah will be the God of all nations
ISAIAH	745-695 BC	God has a remnant for a glorious future
MICAH	740-700 BC	The coming Prince of Peace and His reign
NAHUM	630-610 BC	Impending judgment on Nineveh
ZEPHANIAH	639-608 BC	A new revelation and a new name
JEREMIAH	626-586 BC	Jerusalem's sin, doom and future glory
EZEKIEL	592-570 BC	Fall and the future glory of Jerusalem
OBADIAH	586 BC	The nation of Edom will utterly perish
DANIEL	604-534 BC	Triumph of God's Kingdom over all others
HABAKKUK	606-586 BC	Ultimate triumph for Jehovah's people
HAGGAI	520-516 BC	The second temple and the future third one
ZECHARIAH	520-516 BC	The coming King of kings and His Kingdom
MALACHI	450-400 BC	Closing message of the Messianic age

Each of these men had a specific message to convey mostly to a people who did not want to hear it. All of the dates are estimates, but should be reliable. From 400 BC to about 48 AD the writers of the Bible are silent and their pens still. What are some things God would look for in a person to qualify them as a prophet?

c. Examples of NT Prophets and their Message

The prophets of the New Testament had a somewhat different job to do. The nation of Israel was preparing to reject their Messiah and kill Him. This would force God to turn to a new group of the faithful... the future Church. Prophecy would now be directed to them until the time came when God would, once again, speak to his Israel. The prophets of the OT lived, breathed and usually died in their calling. The prophet of the NT exercised their calling in the form of a gift that was used to direct the believer.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:3,4

Some of the more obvious prophets in the NT were:

SIMEON	Luke 2:25-35	JOHN THE APOSTLE	Book of Revelation
ANNA	Luke 2:36-37	NIGER, LUCIUS, and MANAEN	Acts 13:1-3

Can you name any others in the NT? _____

Prophecy recorded in the NT was used by God to edify or "build" the Body of His Son, Jesus, the Church and was a sign of the presence of God Himself. True prophecy in the Biblical tradition does not always proclaim a new revelation, but could simply be a timely application of an existing truth that hasn't been revealed yet to the one or to the group being told. This holds true in the OT, in the NT and in modern times.

READ 1st Corinthians chapter 14

5. Jesus Christ, The Master and Subject of Prophecy

a. The Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy

The absolute center of God's Word is the history of the fall of mankind and the solution God presents to His creation to return to Him. The way God shows us how to understand His Word is in His Word. (Read Isaiah 28:9-10) He also show us how by the examples of that understanding in the body of His Word.

What is the subject most repeated in the prophecies in the Bible?

How did God fulfill these prophecies?

Is the God we pray to and seek the same as the God King David sought or the Apostle Paul prayed to? Yes, He is identical, no different at all. Remember what we saw in the earlier part of this study, one sure way to know how God intends to fulfill future is to know how He has done it in the past. **Now, look at the handout on Messianic prophecies.**

There are literally hundreds of prophecies about Jesus in the OT that are not listed on your handout. I encourage you to search them out yourself. Jesus Christ the Messiah is the subject and the life of prophecy.

b. End-time Prophecies Spoken by our Lord and Savior

The first group of prophecies are from our Lord Himself. We will look at the Olivet Discourse. It was a very important prophecy that Jesus spoke in His ministry while here on earth. This group of verses has been the subject of hot discussion over the centuries since its record. I believe if we look at it as a group, we can glean several facts from it that will be useful later in study.

The Olivet Discourse: *Matthew 24:3-42* and *Luke 21:7-36* and *Mark 13:4-37*

Matthew 24:3 (Lk. 21:7 and Mk. 13:3): _____

Matthew 24:4-8 (Lk. 21:8-11 and Mk. 13:5-8): _____

Matthew 24:9-14: _____

(The Olivet Discourse, cont.)

Matthew 24:15 (Mk. 13:14 also see Dan. 9:27): _____

Matthew 24:16-20 (Mk. 13:15-18 and Lk. 21:21-24): _____

Matthew 24:21-22 (Mk. 13:19-20): _____

Matthew 24:23-26 (Mk. 13:21-23): _____

Matthew 24:27-31 (Mk. 13:24-27 and Lk. 21:25-28): _____

Matthew 24:32-35 (Mk. 13:28-31 and Lk. 21:29-33): _____

Matthew 24:36-42 (Mk. 13:31-37 and Lk. 21:34-36): _____

Don't expect to understand the entire section after reading through it once. It takes time and plenty of prayer. Scripture says that we take in the Word "here a little and there a little". The methods that we have used on this section of Scripture should work on any other section or subject. Develop your own system of study, one that works for you.

From this point we will move on to end-time prophecies. We will use the literal method of interpretation and try not to read anything into it. It is obvious that the literal method is used almost exclusively for prophecies about the Messiah. What was said would take place took place pretty much the way it was described. Please take the time to begin to read both the Book of Revelation and the Book of Daniel so that you will be familiar with the sections of each book. These two books are connected in a very special way.

6. Examples of Understanding Prophecy

a. Daniel and Revelation

DANIEL

Daniel had several dreams and visions of prophecy during his lifetime. This makes the Book of Daniel worthy of attention for this study. In this portion we will only focus on two... the image Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about and the Seventy Weeks of Years that the angel of the Lord told Daniel about.

The Dream of Nebuchadnezzar

(Read Daniel 2:31-45)

Who was the head of gold? _____

Who was the arms and chest of silver? _____

Who was the belly and thighs of brass? _____

Who was the legs of iron? _____

Who is the feet and toes of iron and clay? _____

Whose kingdom is described in vss. 45-45? _____

Now look at handout #2. Notice that the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was different from the vision of Daniel in 7:2-14. Yet the same eight kingdoms are described. What do you believe to be the reason for the difference? _____

The Seventy Weeks of Years

(Read Daniel 9:25-27)

In this vision of Daniel it is important to note a fact about God that comes up both in Scripture study and in life. God is not governed by time as we are and is actually oblivious to it. It has no power over Him at all and, therefore, does not always play an important role in prophecy. Literally thousands of years can exist between mere words of prophecy. This is true in the case of the Seventy Weeks of Years. (Also see Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18-19)

To what group of people was this prophecy addressed? _____

Let's look at the Seventy Weeks of Years (Literally 490 years) more closely...

Vs. 25: **7-7's of Years, or 49 years.** This is from the command to rebuild the temple (see Nehemiah 2:1-6:19) to its completion. This command occurred in 452 BC.

62-7's of Years, or 434 years. This is from the completion of the temple (approximately 403 BC) to the crucifixion of Christ (the "cutting off").

1-7 of Years, or 7 years. This begins when the "prince" makes a covenant with the Jews and ends when he commits the desolation.

This makes a total of **490** years or “70 Weeks of Years”. Look at verse 24 more closely and let’s list the reasons for this particular prophecy...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

There is a gap in between the 69th and the 70th weeks. This gap is the period that we live in today... the church age. At this time God is not dealing with the nation of Israel. They were dealt with from week 1 through week 69. They will be dealt with again in the 70th week. According to verse 24 this time deals specifically with Daniel’s people... Israel.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Next, we will look at the Book of Revelation. We will focus on only three main prophecies; the Tribulation period, the seven seals and the seven headed beast that comes out of the sea.

Before we can begin this however, we must take a look at a verse that many see as a “key” to understanding this book. It is found in Chapter 1:19. This verse is a command from our Lord to the Apostle John....

<i>“Write the things which thou hast seen...”</i>	(Chapter 1:1 – 1:18)
<i>“... and the things which are...”</i>	(Chapter 1:20 – 3:22)
<i>“... and the things which shall be hereafter.”</i>	(Chapter 4 through 20)

What three time frames do you think this represents? _____

Knowing this helps us see some of the chronology in this book. It is not 100% chronological, but does seem to follow a progression of time. Chapter 4 through 20 details the Tribulation period in ways that are unparalleled anywhere else in Scripture.

What is the Tribulation?

One of the major themes in the Bible is the tribulation that lies ahead. Webster’s dictionary defines tribulation as a time of great misery and distress. The Bible also defines this period as:

**The Day of the Lord
That Great Day
The Time of Jacob’s Trouble
A Day of Darkness
A Day of Wrath**

It is also called a day of judgment, indignation, trial, destruction, desolation, overturning and punishment. Here are more verses..

*Deut. 4:30, 31 Isa. 2:19, 24:1, 3, 6, 19-21 Jerim. 30:7 Dan. 9:27, 12:1
Joel 1:15, 2:1-2 Amos 5:18-20 Zeph. 1:14-15, 18*

This period of terrible time has been a long time coming. What are at least three reasons why it must occur?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Will the church go through this terrible time? This question has been the subject of debate and speculation for eons. Whether or not it will depends on when you fix the time of the 'rapture'. We will discuss this event in the next section.

What is the "Seven Sealed Book"?

READ Revelation 6:1-17

(Compare the 'book' or scroll described in Revelation chapter 6 with the sealed book described in Daniel 12:9)

SEAL #1... [Rev. 6:1-2] *The White Horse Rider*

Some say this is Jesus Christ returning. However, at the time the seal is opening and the rider is going forth on earth, the Lion of Judah (Jesus) is opening the seal. Could this be the anti-Christ looking like Christ bringing war and destruction to the world?

SEAL #2... [Rev. 6:3-4] *The Red Horse Rider*

This seal seems to depict the natural effect of the spread of a power and conquering king... war.

SEAL #3... [Rev. 6:5-6] *The Black Horse Rider*

A vivid description of famine and food shortage. Is this another natural effect of war?

SEAL #4... [Rev. 6:7-8] *The Pale Horse Rider*

When war is waged, especially world-wide war, death is inevitable. This rider is death... wide-spread death of hundreds of thousands.

SEAL #5... [Rev. 6:9-11] *Vision of the Martyred*

Countless numbers of people have been killed for their faith in Christ since the birth of Christianity. This seal seems to depict them actively petitioning God for vengeance.

SEAL #6... [Rev. 6:12-17] *The Day of Wrath*

This is the herald of the beginning of the end. This is the time when God's Wrath is poured out on the inhabitants of earth (See Romans 5:9 and 1st Thessalonians 5:9)

Between the sixth and seventh seals, God seals the 144,000 Jews as a form of protection and divine proclamation.

This is the calm before the storm. This time of silence is to mark the coming beginning of the wrath of God.

Notice in all of this that there is no other explanation as to what or if this scroll represents anything else. That is because it doesn't. Don't add to anything that the Bible itself doesn't explain. Take it literally and as simply as possible.

Now let's look a little closer at the Seven Headed Beast of Chapter 13 and 17 and see if it is literal or symbolic.

The Seven-Headed Beast

READ Revelation 13:1-10 and 17:8-17

In this vision, John sees a disturbing image. The description of this vision is in Chapter 13:

This BEAST:

- Comes out of the sea... "sea" is normally interpreted to mean sea of humanity.
- Has seven heads... later described as kingdoms.
- Has ten horns... smaller kingdoms that sprout upon one of the heads.
- Likeness of a leopard... the symbol of ancient Greece, the feet of a bear... the symbol of ancient Media-Persia, and the mouth of a lion... the symbol of ancient Rome.
- Powered by the dragon... a symbol of Satan.
- One head is wounded to death, but revives. What could this mean?

All this would seem mysterious if not for Chapter 17. As mentioned before, always let the Bible interpret itself. In this case, it does. The angel explains to John that the seven-headed beast represents seven kingdoms. He further explains...

- **"Five are fallen ..."** Nations that have persecuted Israel. These are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media-Persia, and Greece. Keep in mind that the Roman Empire was still very much in charge at the time of this vision.
- **"One is..."** This is the Roman Empire that is.
- **"One is not yet come..."** This is later shown to be the head with the ten horns or smaller kings.
- **"The eighth is of the seven"** It is the beast itself! It is a revived kingdom of the original seven.

The 'one not yet come' is believed by some to have been Nazi Germany with Hitler as the leader. While there is definitely no argument that Hitler persecuted and sought to totally annihilate the Jews in 1940's, there is no conclusive proof. Regardless of whether he is or not, the fact is that this coming 'Anti-Christ' is much worse than ever Adolph Hitler himself.

b. The First Advent and the Second Advent

THE FIRST ADVENT

The word 'advent' is defined as a coming or an arrival. While this word is not found in the Bible, it describes the event clearly.

READ Isaiah 50:6, 53:4-12, Psalms 22:6-8, 109:4, Matthew 20:28, 1st Timothy 2:6

What can be said about Christ's first coming or "Advent"? _____

THE SECOND ADVENT

READ Matthew 24:29-44, 26:63, 64, Zechariah 14:1-11, Revelation 19:11-21

What can be said about Christ's second coming or "Advent"? _____

In the first coming it is clear that Jesus Christ came as a suffering Savior. For the Second Advent, He will come as King of kings. When the Jewish leaders looked at Him, whom do you suppose they wanted to see... the Suffering Savior or the Conquering King?

c. The Rapture

The following is a brief description of what this time is and when many say it will occur. Look at handout #3. As you can see, there is an event that comes before the Second coming that bears little resemblance to it. This event is commonly referred to as the "Rapture". 'Rapture' is a Latin word that means to be caught up. Even though this word is not found in the Bible, the meaning is certainly implied.

Name the most important aspects about the Rapture that are contained in the following three verses...

1st Corinthians 15:35-58 _____

1st Thessalonians 4:13-18 _____

John 14:1-2 _____

Can you see the similarities in these verses? There are other verses that have references to a rapturing out of God's people, a salvation from God's Wrath.

READ Matthew 24:13, Titus 2:11-13, Rev. 3:10 & 6:17, Romans 5:9, 1st Thessalonians 5:9

When does God's Wrath occur? _____

7. The Prophets of Today

a. Signs of the Times

Remember the list of things that our Lord Jesus Christ promised would occur in the last days from our study on the Olivet discourse (Matthew 24)? Are all of these events on the rise? Does the promise of these make you fear or give a blessed hope? Go back to that prophecy in chapter 24 and read verse 6. Today we see the signs of the time. Take the time to read these verses...

Luke 1:50, 6:21, 9:48, 20:36 James 5:11, John 1:12, Matthew 9:41, 10:41, Mark 13:13, Romans 6:16-23, 2:7, Hebrews 10:34, Ephesians 2:19, Revelation 2:26-27, 7:17, 2:7, 20:4-6

b. Modern-time Prophets

A study of 1st Corinthians will reveal that the office of the prophet was a very active one in the early days of the church. False prophecy is on the rise these days. As we rapidly approach the end the lies will spread about the coming of Jesus Christ. Don't be fooled (Matthew 24:32-35).

Let's look at three other places in the New Testament to gather some sort of guideline. What does each of these places in Scripture say about prophets?

Matthew 7:15-20 _____

2nd Timothy 3:2-5 _____

2nd Peter Chapter 2 _____

If we compare some of the false prophets of our day to the real ones of Old Testament days, I believe we will notice something very obvious. True prophets never draw attention to themselves.

Recall how people were commanded to receive prophets in the Old Testament? How do you suppose we are to receive today's prophets?

(1st Thessalonians 5:21-22)

c. God's Purpose for the Prophets and Prophecies of the 21st Century

Knowing what you know about prophecies of the current day, what two groups would you put them into?

1. _____

2. _____

What does 1st Corinthians 14:3 say about prophecy in this modern age as far as its purpose?

Read also, 1st Corinthians 12:31, 14:1, 14:26, 14:40

d. Final Thoughts

Studying prophecy is meant to be richly rewarding. God intends for all of us to desire the meat of His Word, and prophecy is one of the main courses. Remember, your individual success will depend largely on the amount of prayer you offer up to Him. Once you “catch the Spirit” of enthusiasm for studying prophecy, God will start a process of work in you that will leave you with a better understanding of all things.

Some of the resources that I used are listed below. This list does not endorse that author’s work. Visit your local Christian bookstore and check out the books on Bible study and prophecy.

REF:

“Prophecy: A Gift for Today”	Graham Houston
“Prophecy Bible Study Guide”	Charles Swindol
“Dispensational Truth”	Clarence Larkin
“Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy”	J. Barton Payne
“Things to Come”	J. Dwight Pentecost
“Revelation Expounded”	Finis Dake
“Approaching Hoofbeats”	Billy Graham
“Prophecy 2000”	David Allen Lewis
“God’s Plan for Man”	Finis Dake