

Introduction to Lesson 1

Foundations for Prophecy Study

Why Study Prophecy?

Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for **the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**

The intent of this study is to **lay a foundation for the study of prophecy.**

Each lesson introduces a topic that has vital importance to the **overall understanding** of prophecy and prophetic events. Each lesson will be preceded by a reading assignment to be read prior to the classroom presentation. The introductory reading assignment will reinforce and lay the foundation for the classroom study, and may contain additional material not directly presented in the classroom. It is therefore important that you read the introductory reading assignment in advance in order to benefit most from the course.

1. What is Prophecy?¹

- a. Prophecy is history written in advance.

2. Prophecy Deals With²

- a. The whole scope of world history.
- b. Divine purposes of Israel.
- c. The First and Second Comings of Jesus Christ.
- d. The course and destiny of the Church.
- e. Consummation of human history in a kingdom on earth.

3. Subjects Involved in Prophecy are³

- a. Salvation.
- b. Death and resurrection.
- c. Divine judgments of men, angels, and demons.
- d. Eternal punishment.
- e. Heaven.
- f. The New Jerusalem.
- g. The New heaven and new earth.

¹ Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, CHARTING THE END TIMES, A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2001, p. 11.

² John Walvoord, THE FINAL DRAMA, 14 Keys to Understanding the Prophetic Scriptures, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993, p. 6.

³ John Walvoord, THE FINAL DRAMA, 14 Keys to Understanding the Prophetic Scriptures, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993, p. 6.

4. Why Study Prophecy?

- a. It must be important to God since about a **third of the Bible is prophecy**, yet many pastors are afraid to teach it.
 - i. They say it is difficult to understand or too controversial.
 1. The reason may be that many do not want to hear the hard sayings.
 - a. Many are like Israel in Isaiah's time when Isaiah wrote:

Isa 30:9 That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD:

10 Which say to the seers, **See not**; and to the prophets, **Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits**:

11 Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

- b. There are many reasons to study Bible prophecy among which are:⁴
 - i. It gives us a view of God's master plan.
 - ii. Fulfilled prophecy convinces us that God exists.
 - iii. Literal fulfillment of prophecy teaches us that the Bible should be interpreted literally.
 - iv. It prepares the Christian to avoid false prophets.
 - v. It promotes evangelism since we are always focused on Christ's imminent return.
 - vi. It motivates believers to live holy lives since our hope is fixed on Christ's imminent return.
 - vii. It provides hope in a hopeless age.

In these lessons:

- We will address such issues as whether we should interpret the Bible literally.
- We will analyze major Bible prophecies in great detail.
- You will be given a complete overview of key prophecies in the Bible.
- We will discuss the signs of prophecy fulfillment today, especially how prophecy relates to the end-times.

Rules of Prophecy Interpretation

There are four basic rules of interpretation that are keys to understanding prophecy.

⁴ Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice, CHARTING THE END TIMES, A Visual Guide to Understanding Bible Prophecy, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2001, pp. 12-14.

1. The Golden Rule of Interpretation:

*When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at primary, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.*⁵

2. The Law of Double Reference:

The Law of Double Reference is a passage or block of Scripture that blends two different events separated by a gap, a long period of time.⁶

Two examples:

A.

Zech 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. **[First Coming of Jesus Christ]**

10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. **[Second Coming of Jesus Christ]**

B.

Isa 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, **[First Coming of Jesus Christ]** and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; **[Second Coming of Jesus Christ]**

When Jesus read Isaiah 61:1 and 2 in the synagogue He stopped after the first part of verse 2, a clear indication that He fulfilled the first part, but the second part regarding vengeance was for the future. This is recorded by Luke:

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

Some consider that there is another law called the Law of Double Fulfillment that indicates that a passage of Scripture may have two or more fulfillments. Arnold Fruchtenbaum believes that it

⁵ Tim LaHaye, UNDERSTANDING BIBLE PROPHECY FOR YOURSELF, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998, 2001, p. 14. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, a Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events, Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003, 2004, p. 4.

⁶ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, a Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events, Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003, 2004, pp. 4, 5.

R1 Additional notes for Lesson 01.

is best to interpret Scripture as having only one possible fulfillment, not multiple fulfillments. Therefore this method should not be considered in your study of prophecy.⁷

3. The Law of Recurrence:

The Law of Recurrence describes a fact that some passages of Scripture record an event, then it is followed by another recording of the same event giving more or additional details.⁸

Two examples:

A. Ezekiel chapter 38:1-23 records the Gog and Magog war, while Ezekiel 39:1-16 repeats some of the same material and gives some additional material regarding the destruction of the invading army.

B. Genesis 1:1-2:3 records the seven days of creation in a strict chronological sequence, while Genesis 2:4-25 refers back to the sixth day giving additional details as to how Adam and Eve were created.

4. The Law of Context:

The Law of Context says that a verse or verses can only mean what it means in its setting (context). If the chapter in which the verse resides is speaking on a particular topic, then the verse cannot refer to another topic.⁹

Example:

Zech 13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

3 And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

6 And one shall say unto him, **What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.**

Although verse 6 is often used by prophecy teachers as a reference to the wounds of the Messiah, the context of verses 2 to 6 is speaking of false prophets. Therefore verse 6 cannot be a reference to Jesus.¹⁰

⁷ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, a Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events, Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003, 2004, p. 5.

⁸ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, a Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events, Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003, 2004, p. 6.

⁹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, a Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events, Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003, 2004, pp. 6, 7.

What's With All This "A," "Pre," "Post," and "Mid"?

In regards to the Millennium, the various views are as follows:

- **Amillennialism** is the system of interpretation that denies that there will be a thousand-year reign of Christ following the Second Coming. Even amillennialists (no millennium) agree that a literal interpretation of the Bible leads to a premillennial understanding of the coming kingdom as the only possible interpretation.
- **Premillennialist** believe that Christ's Second Coming is before a literal thousand-year earthly reign. Premillennialism is the belief that Christ will come again and set up a thousand year reign on earth. Thus, Premillennialism is the view that Christ's Second Coming will be followed by His reign over an earthly kingdom for one thousand years. For the first two centuries of the Christian Church, premillennialism was the common belief.
- **Postmillennialism** is the position that states that Christ's Second Coming will be preceded by a golden age on earth of one thousand years. This view says that the Gospel will be triumphant and the earthly kingdom will conclude with the Second Coming.¹¹

In regards to the timing of the Rapture, the various views are as follows:

- **Pre-tribulationism** is the belief that the Rapture will occur before the seven-year tribulation, and that the church will not go through the Tribulation.
- **Post-tribulationism** believes that the second coming of Christ takes place after the Tribulation, and that it happens only at the end of the Tribulation, and does not occur at any other time. Post-tribulationists believe that the Rapture and the Second Coming (He comes and the whole world sees Him) are one and the same event. Simply put, Post-tribulationists therefore believe that the Rapture comes after the Tribulation.
- **Mid-Tribulationism** sees the Rapture occurring at the mid point of the Tribulation, usually seen as occurring in Revelation 11:11-12.
- **Partial Rapture Theory** says that only spirit filled believers are raptured. Carnal believers will go through the Tribulation.
- **Pre-wrath Rapture Theory** – All pre-tribulationists are also pre-wrath. The difference is in the meaning of wrath. All believers will be delivered from the wrath to come, but according to this theory, the wrath of God refers only to the seven last plagues of Revelation chapters 15 and 16.

There are other variations, but these are the main ones.

This teacher and this church subscribe to the Pre-Millennial and Pre-Tribulation positions.

Preterism¹²

Preterism is a variant of Christian eschatology which holds that some or all of the biblical prophecies concerning the Last Days or End Times refer to events which

¹⁰ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MESSIAH, a Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events, Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003, 2004, p. 7.

¹¹ John Walvoord, THE FINAL DRAMA, 14 Keys to Understanding the Prophetic Scriptures, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993, pp. 10-19.

¹² Definitions excerpted from Wikipedia.

actually happened in the first century after Christ's birth. The term **preterism** comes from the Latin *praeter*, meaning "past". Adherents of Preterism are known as Preterists.

The two principal schools of Preterist thought are commonly called **Partial Preterism** and **Full Preterism**. Preterists disagree significantly about the exact meaning of the terms used to denote these divisions of Preterist thought.

Partial preterism is the older of the two views, dating back to even the 2nd century Church fathers. Partial Preterism holds that prophecies such as the destruction of Jerusalem, the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, and the advent of the Day of the Lord as a "judgment-coming" of Christ were fulfilled c. AD 70 when the Roman general (and future Emperor) Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish Temple, putting a permanent stop to the daily animal sacrifices. It identifies "Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17-18) with the ancient pagan City of Rome or Jerusalem. Some adherents of Partial Preterism see the Emperor Diocletian as the fulfillment of the "little horn" prophecy of Daniel 7. Partial Preterism is also known by several other names: Orthodox Preterism, Historic Preterism, Hypo-Preterism (a term used by some opponents of the partial preterist position and considered to be derogatory by partial preterists), and Moderate Preterism.

Full Preterism differs from Partial Preterism in that Full Preterists believe *all* prophecy was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem, including the resurrection of the dead and Jesus' Second Coming or *Parousia*. Full Preterism is also known by several other names: Consistent Preterism, Covenant Eschatology, Hyper-Preterism (a term used by some opponents of the Full Preterist position and considered to be derogatory by Full Preterists), and Pantelism (the term "Pantelism" comes from the Greek and means, "all things having been accomplished"). Full Preterism holds that Jesus' Second Coming is to be viewed not as a future-to-us bodily return, but rather a "return" in glory manifested by the physical destruction of Jerusalem and her Temple in AD 70 by foreign armies in a manner similar to various Old Testament descriptions of God coming to destroy other nations in righteous judgment. Full Preterism also holds that the Resurrection of the dead did not entail the raising of the physical body, but rather the resurrection of the soul from the "place of the dead", known as Sheol (Hebrew) or Hades (Greek). As such, the righteous dead obtained a spiritual and substantial body for use in the heavenly realm, and the unrighteous dead were cast into the *Lake of Fire*. Some Full Preterists believe this judgment is ongoing and takes effect upon the death of each individual (Heb. 9:27). The New Heavens and the New Earth are also equated with the New Covenant and the fulfillment of the Law in AD 70 and are to be viewed in the same manner by which a Christian is considered a "new creation" upon his or her conversion.

Preterism and its variations is a view not supported by this teacher or this church.