

DISCOVER PROPHECY



On The Eve Of Armageddon

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A Sobering Scare

During my Junior year in high school, my parents separated. My mother moved several hours away and my stepfather and I remained in our home. As a result of the separation, my life began to crumble around me.

I had been drinking alcohol for some time and the uneventful family turmoil only gave me greater cause to drown my worries in drinking. I drank regularly on the weekends and began drinking more during the week. There had actually been several times that I went to school still under the influence of alcohol.

I began wondering if I was an alcoholic. Several times I had heard that a sure sign of an alcoholic was someone that could not turn down a drink. I determined that the next time I was offered a drink, I would refuse it. Unfortunately, a few days later I was at a party and did not refuse. I got drunk!

I came home from the party and feared my life was destined to failure. As I pondered my life, I realized I was not happy. The last time I could really remember being happy was when I was a kid going to church. I decided to try God again.

After digging through my closet I found my old Bible. I had not read it for years. I had no idea where to turn but there was a part of me that believed that we were living in the last days. I had always believed that the book of Revelation was for the last days so I turned to the book of Revelation.

Unknowingly, I turned to Revelation chapter 13 and began to read. And this is what I read:

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that

the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six” Revelation 1:11-18.

As you can imagine, as I read this passage through, fear gripped my heart. I had no idea what the beast was let alone what his mark would be. All that I knew was that in the last days there would be two groups: (1) those who receive the mark of the beast and are eternally lost and (2) those who do not receive the beast’s mark, but are tortured because of it.

I had no idea what the beast was and no idea what his mark would be. I knew that either way, I was lost. I was sure not to make it through the last days.

Confusion About Revelation

There seems to be so much confusion on the subject of Revelation. Make your way to the local Christian bookstore and check out the prophecy section. One thing you’ll learn right away is that there are so many different views on the subject of Revelation. How do we know for sure that what we are reading or what we are learning is true?

Some writers and preachers of Bible prophecy focus on the sensational and are constantly changing their material when it proves inaccurate. Other people wonder if Bible prophecy can even be understood at all. It is our goal at this Bible prophecy seminar to make the prophecies of the Bible understood.

During this series, you will understand Bible prophecy as you have never understood them before and the amazing story of the cosmic drama unfolding between the forces of good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of Christ.

Let me give you three basic principles of Bible

study that will serve as our guidelines for this seminar together.

1. Biblical Interpretation Only

The prophetic symbols and message of Bible prophecy must be interpreted by the Bible alone. "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation" 2 Peter 1:20.

Though we each have our own ideas about the Bible and its prophecies, we will reserve our study and its interpretation to what the Bible clearly says. Therefore, please do not easily accept my words. We provide these handouts so that you can later take the time to look up the texts for yourself.

Let me give you an example of not taking my word for it and our allowing the Bible to interpret itself.

Do you remember the story of Noah's ark? Aside from the death of Christ, Noah's ark is the most popular story of the Bible. There are songs, books, cartoons, movies, felts, children's toys and pictures with the theme of Noah's ark. In fact, when our son Ethan was born we brought him home to a room decorated with stuffed animals and wall paper with Noah's ark.

I can remember going to church as a child and singing the songs about Noah's ark. Do you? I'm guessing you're familiar with it, too. Let me quiz you to refresh your memory if it's been awhile. How many of each animal went onto the ark? How many pigs went onto the ark? How many cows went onto the ark? How many elephants went onto the ark? How many tigers were the on the ark? Do you know? How do you know? Have you looked it up for yourself?

"...there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah" Genesis 7:9. Here we see the animals entered the ark by twos, but when asking how many of each, the Bible answers: "You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female" Genesis 7:2.

According to the Bible, there were seven of some of the animals and some just two. The Bible says that there were seven of the clean and two of the unclean (Leviticus chapter 11 defines the difference between the two). Yet there is more evidence that there were some that went on by sevens.

Do you remember the first thing Noah and his family did when they came off the ark? When they saw the rainbow, as they came off the ark, they stopped and did something.

"Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of

every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar" Genesis 8:20. Now let me ask you a simple question: If there had only been two of each animal on the ark and Noah sacrificed some of them, would they have continued through history? No, of course not! But since there were seven of the clean, you can sacrifice one and you would have three pair remaining to multiply.

Now I'm not saying that our understanding of Noah's ark and the number of animals that entered it are crucial to our salvation but if the most popular story of the Bible, aside from the death of Christ, is not properly understood, we may not correctly understand Bible prophecy and God's plan for the last days. And the reason so many are misinformed about Noah's ark is that they've never studied it for themselves and they have not let the Bible explain it.

In our Bible prophecy seminar we will let the Bible explain itself and I encourage you to study it too.

Biblical Symbols

Let me give you just a few more examples of how the Bible can be used to interpret itself in Bible prophecy:

1. *Angel = Messenger.* "The angel answered and said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news'" Luke 1:19.
2. *Mark = Sign or seal of approval or disapproval.* "And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads'" Revelation 7:2,3.
3. *Water = Inhabited area/people, nations.* "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" Revelation 17:15.
4. *Beast = Kingdom/government/political power.* "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth" Daniel 7:17.
5. *Babylon = Religious apostasy/confusion.* "The LORD said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the

face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel" Genesis 11:6-9

2. Revelation of Jesus

Prophecy can be understood correctly only as it centers in and uplifts Jesus Christ. The entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, points to and reveals Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation begins with these words, "The revelation of Jesus Christ" Revelation 1:1.

As we journey through this series, we will discover many wonderful and amazing things, but the greatest thing about this series is not that the secrets of Bible prophecy are opened before us, but rather that they reveal a loving God who desires to be your best friend. It is our hope that, no matter where you are in your spiritual journey, you will come to know Jesus more.

Together in this series we will identify the Beast of Revelation and his dreadful mark; we will understand the Bible's millennium and when it will begin; we will expose the mystical Babylon and the four horseman of the Apocalypse but the most exciting part of the seminar is what we learn about Jesus and how we grow in him.

3. Preparation for the End-time

The focus of our study will be on the preparation needed for the end time. Because Bible prophecy says a great deal about the last days, our focus will be to not only better understand what the Bible says about the last days but what we can do to be prepared for it.

"Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end" Daniel 8:19.

The reason God provides this information to us through His Word is so that we will be prepared for what comes ahead. "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book" Revelation 22:7. "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near" Revelation 1:3.

The messages of Bible prophecy are written as warnings to us to prepare us. If these warnings go unheeded, we may not be ready for the last days.

On April 14, 1912, the R.M.S. Titanic received at least six warning messages of the coming icebergs but the warnings were all unheeded and they were unaware of what lay ahead.

"Put together, the 6 messages indicated an enormous belt of ice stretching some 78 miles directly across the big ships path" The Night Lives On, Page 49.

Revelation's Message of Warning

In Revelation chapter 14 we see a message sent to this earth from God. Before we look at this vital message of warning, let's first look at Revelation 14:14-15, "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.'" What event do we see here? It is the great harvest- or second coming.

The verses just preceding these record the warning. Therefore, what we see here is God's final message of warning, just prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. Let's look at this message

This warning, found in Revelation 14:6-13, is a three part message given by three different angels.

"And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters" Revelation 14:6-7.

As we discovered already, an angel represents a messenger. Here is Revelation, just prior to the second coming of Jesus, we see a message given to the earth to prepare people for the second coming. This first angel preaches concerning the eternal gospel and that it is for everyone on the earth. The message is almost an outline as he continues to say that once you turn to Christ and accept the gospel, you are to worship the creator God and give Him glory. Since the second coming is so near and that now is the time to accept salvation, the impending judgment hour is at hand.

Following this angel is a second, giving a message of warning again falsehood. "And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality'" Revelation 14:8. As we saw earlier in Genesis, Babylon (or babel) represented confusion and unfortunately, just prior to the second coming of Jesus, there will be wide spread spiritual confusion and this second warning is calling people instead to biblical truth.

A third and final angel sweeps across the heavens, heralding a message to the world. "Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a

mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger" Revelation 14:9-10. The Bible tells us that there will be a world-wide beast power in the last days and that this beast will force a mark upon mankind. Those who do not receive his mark will be persecuted, those who do will be eternally lost.

Why are these three angels spreading this information? Because as we face these last days, we live in a time of great spiritual confusion and the God of love does not want to leave us in the dark as to the events that lie ahead. He warns us so that we will not only be aware, but prepared in our hearts. So that we can have a real, personal relationship with this awesome creator God.

Jesus Wants You To Be Ready

More than anything else, I want to see you come to Jesus Christ. If you are saved, I want to see you grow stronger in Christ. I want to do all that I can do to bring people to salvation. I know that is what the Lord wants. The Bible says, "The Lord is not slow about His promise [the promise of His second coming], as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" 2 Peter 3:9.

There is a reason Jesus has not returned yet. Maybe it is because He is waiting on you. He wants you to come to Him. He wants you to be ready.

But just the same, friends, Jesus is not going to wait forever. He will come again, just as He promised. Will you be ready?

Don't delay! It is best for you to get ready now so that when Jesus does come, it will not take you by surprise. He will come as He said, the signs of the times tell us soon. But if you are not ready, you might be left behind.

"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason, you be ready too; for the Son of man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will" Matthew 24:42-44.

Don't be caught off guard. All you have to do is choose for yourself that you plan on being ready. And that's just what this series is for: to prepare people for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

