Grace Evangelical Free Church November 13, 2022

**Numbers 23:19** Importance of Prophecy

Because the Bible is the only book which gives us an accurate forecast of the future, we must study to be delivered from inexcusable ignorance and prepared as God unfolds His prophetic program (**Matthew 22:29**). Many Christians do not study prophecy:

* Some mistakenly think that the subject is too involved and difficult. Prophetic truth revealed in the Bible may be understood by all who will obey **2 Timothy 2:15**.
* Some feel that to study prophecy leads to speculation.
* Some suggest the prophetic outlook is a very dark one and that to study it leads to pessimism (**Isaiah 53:11**; **Hebrews 10:13**).

**Numbers 23:19**: **“God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?**”

* **Grammatical Usage:** “**said**” or in Hebrew, “amar” meaning, “declare”; “**spoken**” or “dabar” meaning, “command”.
* **Literal Interpretation:** **God is not a man, that he might lie, or a son of man, that he might change his mind. Does he declare and not act, or command and not fulfill?**
* **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. Consider the following propositions which constitute some of the reasons why we should study prophecy:

1. The major portion of the Bible consists of prophecy; thus, if we neglect this portion we neglect the major part of our Bible. The whole Bible is inspired, and it contains God’s message concerning future things.

2. The Scriptures cannot be rightly understood or unfolded if the prophetic sections are neglected. The Bible is one glorious whole, and there is a unity running through the entire book. If “the New (Testament) is in the Old concealed and the Old (Testament) is in the New revealed”, then we must study Old and New to gain the message of the whole.

3. There is a special reason why we should search, study, understand and believe the prophetic Word. In **Luke 24**, notice that the word “**all**” is used three times in **vv. 25**; **27**. By this statement our Lord set His seal to the reliability and the authority of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. Does this not constitute a strong reason why we should study these prophecies, especially as they reveal Him? (**Luke 24:27**; **John 5:39**).

4. The already fulfilled prophecies in the Bible in a special way confirm the inspiration, the accuracy and therefore the authority of the Book. Why is this? Because all the Bible prophecies which have been fulfilled have been fulfilled literally, to the very letter. Prophecies relating to the coming of the Messiah, to the Jews and to the Gentiles were written hundreds of years before they were fulfilled. Take the following prophecies relating to our Lord’s first advent:

* **Isaiah 40:3** tells us that John was to be His forerunner;
* **Isaiah 7:14** that He would be born of a virgin;
* **Micah 5:2** that He would be born in Bethlehem;
* **Psalm 72:10**; **15** that the Wise Men would visit Him;
* **Isaiah 53** that He would be the sin-bearer of His people;
* **Zechariah 11:12-13** that He would be betrayed and sold for thirty pieces of silver;
* **Psalm 22:14; 17** that He would be crucified;
* **Isaiah 53:9** that He would be buried with the rich;
* **Psalm 16:8-10** that He would rise again;
* **Psalm 68:18** that He would ascend on high.

Thus, seeing that all the prophecies concerning our Lord’s first advent were literally fulfilled, does not this fact give us great confidence in the Bible, and are we not also perfectly justified in expecting that all the prophecies concerning His second advent, and all the prophecies which await fulfilment, will also be literally fulfilled?

5. Only by reading and studying the prophetic Scriptures can we know what God is doing and thus be prepared for events. The prophetic word is God’s blueprint of future events: look up **Amos 3:7**, and then **Genesis 18:17**; **John 15:15** and **16:4** and compare **Romans 11:25**; **1 Corinthians 10:1** and **1 Thessalonians 4:13**.

6. Prophetic truth strengthens faith at a time when the whole world is gripped with fear.

**Luke 21:26** is certainly true of many in the world today, but **Luke 21:28** should be true of all believers. If we leave God out of our reckoning, how can we help but being fearful as we look out on the world with all its unrest, alarm, arming for war and wickedness?

7. We must warn the ungodly of what is going to happen in the future; to do this we must be instructed in God’s program for the days ahead. Every Christian should be constantly re-echoing John the Baptist’s warning of **Matthew 3:7**, for God’s solemn judgments are soon to fall upon a Christ-rejecting world (look up **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9** and **Ezekiel 33:7-8**). Do you know any more solemn words than these?

8. Only as we understand the prophetic Word shall we be safeguarded against the perils and vices which are peculiar to these closing days of the age. We should constantly read **2 Timothy 3:1-13** which details the characteristics of these days, and that **vv. 14-17** tell us how we may be delivered from the “pull” of these evil things.

9. Prophetic truth received into the mind and heart powerfully influences character and conduct. In **Romans 15:4** we are told about three results of studying prophecy, and **Daniel 10:19** has something important to say to us about this too!

10. There is a special blessing promised to all who will read and study God’s prophetic truth. We are specifically told this in **Revelation 1:3** and **22:7**.

* **Conclusion**: Have you trusted God with your future?