

Prophecy and the Return of the Lord

August 2, 2015

I. The Bible is a book of prophecy

A. The Old is the New concealed; the New is the Old revealed

The Old Testament is a book of prophecy, the New Testament explains these prophecies.

Matthew makes 65 references to the Old Testament.

Matthew constantly speaks about the Old Testament being fulfilled. He says that the events of the New Testament that focused on Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.

He specifically states this truth twelve times in his gospel: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet ..." (Mat 1:22; 2:15, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9).

B. Biblical phraseology

There are 18 phrases describing the end of the age; in four specific groups as follows:

1) The day of:

1. The Lord: (Isa 13:6-11; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11-14; 3:14-15; 1Thes 5:2; 2Thes 2:2; 1Pt 3:10)
2. Judgment: (Mt 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36-37; 2Pt 2:9; 3:7; 1Jn 4:17)
3. Christ (Jesus): (Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1Cor 5:5)
4. Redemption: (Eph 4:30)
5. Visitation: (1Pt 2:12)
6. His coming: (Mal 3:2-3)
7. Eternity: (2Pt 3:18)
8. The day drawing near: (Heb 10:25)

2) The coming of:

9. His coming: (Mal 3:2-3)
10. The coming of the Lord: (1Thes 4:15; Jas 5:7-8)
11. The coming of the day of God: (2Pt 3:10-13)
12. The Lord is near: (Phil 4:5; Jas 5:8)

3) The last:

13. The last days: (Isa 2:2; Hos 3:4-5; Ac 2:14-17; 2Tim 3:1; Heb 1:1-2; 2Pt 3:3-4)
14. The last hour: (1Jn 2:18)
15. The last time: (1Pt 1:5; Jude 18)
16. These last times: (1Pt 1:20-21)

4) The end of:

17. The age: (Dan 12:1-4, 8-13; Mat 13:39-40, 47-50; 24:1-3; 28:20)
18. All things: (1Pt 4:7)

C. False prophecies and predictions

As far back as the days of the New Testament, people were making false claims about the time of Jesus' return, and events linked to it. Paul warned: "Do not become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, false report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the Day of the Lord has already come." 2 Thes 2:2

1) The birth of the Antichrist - Before the end of the fourth century, Martin of Tours confidently stated that the Antichrist had already been born.

2) As the year 999 came to an end, crowds of crying people pushed their way into the old basilica of St Peter's in Rome, expecting the end of the world to occur as the dawn of the new millennium (1000) was ushered in.

3) The destruction of the Roman papacy - Some Christians have identified certain prophecies in the Book of Revelation with Rome, the center of Roman Catholicism. Joachim prophesied, way back in the thirteenth century, that the papacy in Rome would be utterly destroyed in 1260.

- 4) 1528 Hans Nut, a German bookbinder and self-declared prophet, claimed that the world would come to an end in 1528.
- 5) The Seventh-day Adventist prediction -
The Seventh Day Adventist, William Miller, predicted that Jesus would finally return between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844.
- 6) The Mormon prediction
The founder of the Mormons, Joseph Smith, predicted that the second coming of Jesus would take place before the end of 1891.
- 7) 1933 According the respected Bible teacher Oswald J. Smith, in his book *Is the Antichrist at Hand?*, "the great tribulation, revival of the Roman empire, reign of Antichrist, and the battle of Armageddon must take place before the year 1933."
- 8) The date of the battle of Armageddon - The spiritual leader of the Lighthouse Gospel Tract Foundation, Maupin, predicted that:
The rapture would take place before July, 1981.
Satan would appear before December 1984.
Satan would rule the world until May 14, 1988.
The battle of Armageddon would take place on May 14, 1988.
- 9) The date of the rapture -
The word "rapture" refers to the act of transferring a person from earth to heaven. It specifically refers to Christians being united with Jesus at his second coming: "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thes 4:17
- A writer, using the pen name "Ted," in *Deadline 1981, Mockers Beware*, Vol. 1, declared that the rapture was about to arrive in August 1980, or at the latest by June 20, 1981.
- According to Dr. Charles Taylor, the rapture was to take place on September 25, 1975.
- October 28, 1992 was the predicted date for the rapture, according to an undated tract, not attributed to a named author, entitled *Mission For The Coming Days*, Orange County Division, Orange County, CA.
- 10) 1988 If you had contributed \$5 in 1988 to Ministries Inc., Montgomery, Alabama, you could have received a book by Rev. Colin Deal entitled *Christ Returns by 1988 - 101 Reasons Why*.

II. Facts about the second coming of Christ

A. The Coming of Christ is Imminent - Christians live with a sense of hope and excitement about the possibility of Christ coming at any time!

Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; ...

Rev 22:7 "And behold, I am coming quickly ..." (Rev 22:12, 20)

1Pt 4:7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. (Jas 5:8; Rev 22:10; Mat 24:33-34; Rom 13:11; 1Cor 7:29-31)

B. What are the signs of the end of the world?

Although differing over details, the return of Christ is a doctrine that evangelicals hold in common. It is a prominent doctrine in the Scriptures, being mentioned more than 300 times in the New Testament, with entire chapters (Mt 13, 24, 25; Mk 13; Lk 21) being given to the discussion of Christ return and even the majority of some books (1 & 2 Thes; Rev) [from Henry C Theissen; *Lectures in Systematic Theology*].

Bible prophecy has predicted that certain events will take place before Jesus returns.

1. The Antichrist
 - The appearance of a personal antichrist (2 Thes 2:1-12; 1 John 2:18; Rev 13:11-18).
 - The present spirit of antichrist - distorts who Jesus Christ is (1Jn 2:22-23; 4:1-3; 2Jn 7)
 - We are to live in victory over the spirit of antichrist (1Jn 4:4).
2. A period of unparalleled world tribulation

Mt 24:21-22 "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short." (Mk 13:19-20; Rev 3:10; 7:9-14)
3. One world government; the unification of the world's religious, political, and economic systems.

Rev 13:3 And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; ...
Rev 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, ... (Rev. 13:4-17; 17:1-18; 18:1-24)
4. Increase of wars and rumors of war

Mt 24:6 "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars ... (Mk 13:7-8; Lk 21:9)
5. Population explosion

Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. (Rev 17:15)
6. Pollution

Isa 24:5-6 The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore, a curse devours the earth, (Isa 24:1-6)
7. The increase of knowledge

Dan 12:4 "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."
8. Increase in travel and speed (Dan. 12:4).
9. Persecution and betrayal of Christians

Mk 13:9 "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them. (Mk 13:9-11; Mat 24:9-10; Lk 21:12-15; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:14)
10. Great upheavals in the Holy Land; Jerusalem encompassed about with enemies.

Ezk 39:7 "My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. (Mk 13:14-18; Mat 24:15-20; Lk 21:20-24)

The return of the Jews to Palestine is associated with the Lord's return (Deut 30:1-3; Zech 14:1-4). A return in unbelief, Zech. 12:9-13, is to precede the promised divine regathering at the Lord's return (Jer. 31:10). The recovery of Jerusalem by the Jews after it was controlled by Gentiles for 2000 years is remarkable in view of Luke 21:24. Worldwide interest in the near east suggests the possible early fulfillment of Zech. 12:2-3, when Jerusalem is to become a world problem.
11. Rise in false prophets and teachers

Mt 24:11 "Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many." (Mt 24:24; 1 Tim 4:1; 2Tim 3:1-9; 2Pt 1-3; 1 Jn 2:18; 4:3)
12. Extreme materialism

2 Ti 3:1-4 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power;
13. Lawlessness and cold love.

Mt 24:12 "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.

14. Universal drug usage
Rev 9:20-21 The rest of mankind, ... they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts. (The word "sorceries" here can also refer to drugs.)
 15. Widespread violence
Gen 6:11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. (Gen 6:11-13; Rev 9:21).
 16. Mass slaughter of innocents by unconcerned mothers [abortion] (Rom. 1:31; 2Tim 3:3).
 17. Abnormal sexual practices
2Pt 2:9-10 ... unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. (Rom 1:17-32; 2Pt 2:14; 3:3; Jude 18)
 18. Self-seeking and pleasure seeking (2 Tim 3:2-4).
 19. Intense demonic activity
1Tim 4:1 "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." (2Pt 1:2; Gen 6:1-4; 1Tim 4:1-3)
 20. Blasphemy
Jude 18 that they were saying to you, " In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts. (2 Tim. 3:2; 2 Pet. 3:3)
 21. The loss of societal conscience
1 Ti 4:1-2 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,
 22. Outright devil worshippers
Rev 9:20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, ... (Rev 13:11-14).
 23. Rejection of God's Word
2Pt 3:3-4 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, " Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." (2 Ti 4:3-4; 2Pt 3:16)
 24. Rejection and lawlessness of God himself
Ps 2:1-3 Why are the nations in an uproar ... 2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!" (Mt 24:12-13)
 25. False claims of peace
1Th 5:1-3 ... While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly"
 26. Many Christians will be unprepared, some will lose their faith
2 Th 2:3 for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, (1Tim 4:1-4; 2 Tim 3:5; 4:3-4; 2 Pt 3:3-4)
 27. There Will Be Global Distress on an Unprecedented Scale;
Dan 12:1 "There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then." (Zep 1:14-15)
- This will include natural disasters. (Mt 24:7; Mk 13:8; Lk 21:25-26; Rev 6:5-8)
- Famine; (Mk 13:8; Mt 24:7-8; Lk 21:11)
 - Earthquakes (and tsunamis) in many places. (Mk 13:8; Mt 24:7; Lk 21:11)
 - Pestilences. (Mk 13:8; Mt 24:9; Lk 21:11)

28. Fearful signs in the heavens.

Mt 24:29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Mk 13:24-25; Lk 21:11, 25-26)

29. The gospel is preached in all ethnic groups in the earth

Mk 13:10 The gospel must first be preached to all the nations. (Mt 24:14; Rev 14:14-16)

C. The day of the Lord will come - like labor pains upon a woman with child,

1Thes 5:1-4 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; (Isa 13:6-14; 26:17-19; 26:20-21; Rev 12:1-2)

D. The fig tree What the fig tree teaches; (Mt 24:32-36)

Perhaps recalling the question of when these things would occur (24:3), Jesus said that just as the buds on a fig tree announce summer so also the disciples would know Christ's prophecies were about to be fulfilled "when [they saw] the events [he] described beginning to happen" (24:33).

Since Israel was often described as figs or a fig tree many scholars today see the rebirth of Israel as a harbinger of the end times.

Prophetic words concerning judgment on Judah; she is compared to a fig tree.

Judah (Israel) is compared to both good and bad figs (Jer 24:1-10).

- Israel's beginning is compared to the fruit of a fig tree (Hos 9:10).
- Judah is compared to a stripped fig tree (Joel 1:6-7, 12).
- Judgment on Israel is because she bears no figs [fruit] (Hab 3:16-17).
- Restoration of the temple was like gathering of the fig tree (Hag 2:18-19).
- Jesus calls Nathanael a true "Israelite;" He saw Nathanael under the fig tree (Jn 1:47-50).
- Jesus' parable of the fig tree; interpretation concerns Israel being rejected (Lk 13:6-9).
- Jesus curses the fig tree before he cleanses the Temple (Mt 21:18-19; Mk 11:13-14).
- Jesus speaks of the fig tree concerning His return (Mt 24:32-35; Lk 21:29-32; Mk 13:28-32).

Other reference to fig tree: (Pr 27:18; Song 2:13; Isa 34:4; 36:16; Jer 8:13; Joel 2:22-23; Mic 4:3-4; Zec 3:10; Rev 6:12-17)

III. Application

A. Letter from Dutch Sheets - Concerning the Recent Supreme Court Marriage Ruling

Five thoughts to consider:

1. The Bible is still God's standard
2. There is an all-out attempt by politicians, educators and others to change America from a biblically based, Christian nation to a secular nation.
3. God will not be mocked (Galatians 6:7).
4. America will experience further judgment.

There are two types of judgment in Scripture. There are direct actions by God, such as the plagues visited on Egypt because of their slavery and mistreatment of Israel. And there are also the built-in results of sin. Disobedience to God also moves us out from under His protection, which is another form of judgment. Jonah 2:8 says those who worship idols, forfeit the grace of mercy that could be theirs. In most cases, judgment is simply losing the blessing, favor, and the protection of God.

Most "judgments" are simply the inevitable and automatic results of disobeying God's word and principles, not God's direct action.

5. God is not finished with America.

B. What the church can look forward to in the last days:

1. The church will be glorious and victorious (Eph 5:27; Isa 60:13).
2. There will be days of great harvest (Mat 13:39; Rev 14:15).
3. There will be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29; Ac 2:17-18).
4. The spirit and power of Elijah will be on the church (Mal 3:1; 4:5-6).
5. The gospel will be preached to every ethnic linguistic group in the world (Mat 24:14).
6. The kingdom of God will come to mature fruit (James 5:7-8; Rev 22:11).

C. Conclusion:

1. We wait for His return with eagerness (1 Cor 1:4-8).
2. Knowing what is to come enables us to live holy for the Lord (Titus 2:11-13).
3. We are to love His appearing (2 Tim 4:8).
4. We wait with perseverance through our suffering (Rom 8:22-25).

The following References were used in this study:

Bible Prophecy Made Easy; by Mark Water
Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible
The Outline Bible
New Bible Dictionary
Willmington's Bible handbook
Systematic theology; by C. Hodge,