

PROPHETIC MALNUTRITION

By Steve Schmutzer

[Steve's Website](#) [Contact Steve](#) [Steve's Article Podcast](#) [Steve's Daniel Class Podcast](#)

How well will your car perform if you've removed one wheel? Would you sit down in a chair with a leg missing? Do you trust a plane with only three of its four wings?

These questions may seem absurd, but they each have something in common. In each case, 25% of something important is missing. And in each scenario, you would be at risk if you settled for less. No reasonable person would willingly choose to put themselves in these situations.

So why do we choose to regard the Bible differently than we would regard the car, the chair, or the plane? I'll pose the same question another way, but with greater relevance this time: "Why do so many pastors, teachers, and "Christian leaders" choose to ignore, revile, dilute, and misrepresent the 25% of God's Word which comprises the prophetic Scriptures?"

Here are a few compelling facts to consider from the "The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy" by J. Barton Payne:

- There are 1,239 prophecies in the Old Testament and 578 in the New Testament for a total of 1,817 prophecies.
- These prophecies are included within 8,352 verses of the Bible.
- Since there are 31,124 verses in the Bible, the 8,352 verses that contain prophecy constitute 26.8 percent of the Bible's volume.

So I'm being conservative here. That's actually a bit more than 25% of the Word of God!

The entire Bible has prophetic themes woven throughout. It is prophetic at the very beginning in Genesis chapter 3 when the conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent was foretold. And it is prophetic at the very end of Revelation when the reign of Christ is anticipated for all eternity. The prophetic Scriptures so dominate the whole Bible that they're impossible to avoid unless one intentionally changes their gait through its pages the same way one avoids stepping on cracks in the sidewalk.

Digging a bit deeper here uncovers more to think about. Over 1500 of the prophecies of the Bible are devoted to Christ's Second Coming. For every prophecy in the Old Testament about Jesus' First Coming, there are eight about His Second Coming. Christ's return also comprises one of every five verses in the New Testament.

Here's where the rubber meets the road. If the Bible makes prophecy a priority, so should we. If an emphasis of the New Testament is the Second Coming of Christ, we should make that an emphasis too. If prophetic themes crop up all the time throughout the entire Word of God, we should be seeing prophetic themes salting many of our sermons and lessons.

But we don't.

It was not always like this, and we can look at Paul's example as a case in point. We know Paul as the converted persecutor of early Christians, and as the agent through which the Holy Spirit authored most of the New Testament. We are less familiar with Paul's activities during his missionary journeys, but it's here that I want point out something important.

It concerns the church of Thessalonica which Paul visited on his second missionary journey. His time with them was brief as Acts 17:2 may suggest. He followed that visit up with the letters we call 1 & 2 Thessalonians, and now it gets interesting.

Word had come to Paul that apostate teachings had entered the young Thessalonian church, heresies which conflicted with the things he had personally taught them. Chapter two of 2 Thessalonians dives right into the problem and it concerns the second coming of Jesus Christ. Paul dispenses a healthy portion of meat in this chapter, but he asks in 2 Thessalonians 2:5, "*Don't you remember when I was with you I used to tell you these things?*"

It's easy to overlook the layout of this situation, but here it is:

- The Thessalonian church was new in its faith and organization.
- Paul didn't have a lot of time with them, but he used what little he had to emphasize the themes of prophecy.
- Specifically, Paul taught these early believers about Christ's Second Advent, about the Antichrist, about the Rapture, and about the Great Tribulation.

It's time for a reality check. This was a young church, right? Yup. And the believers faced external persecution and internal discord just like believers do today, correct? Mm-Hmm. And the congregation was trying to minister to the needs of those inside and outside the faith, right? You bet.

So what gives with this emphasis on prophecy? Shouldn't Paul have focused on Christian community, the love of Jesus, responsible tithing, and what it means to really care? Let's get real here, *eschatology*? Isn't that the fringe stuff that's not really central to our faith? Shouldn't he have emphasized Jesus since it's all about Jesus anyway?

Maybe it's the church of *today* that needs to learn something from the church of *yesterday*. Our pastors, teachers, and "Christian leaders" would be wise to take a cue from Paul. It's high time we reintroduced 25% of the divinely-inspired Word of God back into our regular diets.

I have to be brutally honest here. I'm alarmed at the posture of the greater church towards the prophetic Word of God. In an abject display of 2 Peter 3:4, the average church today doubts and belittles the very doctrines Paul considered vital to the faith of a believer and to the health of a congregation. Trapped within the clutches of Rev. 3:15-20, the church today is blind to its

own prognosis. It has vaccinated itself against receiving the full truth by permitting only a portion of it to have any effect.

I'm concerned that we've allowed the good to become the enemy of the best. To repeat a phrase I touched on earlier, it's common to hear, "It's all about Jesus." This is a standard line that many folks parrot when they find themselves confronted by spiritual issues that challenge their personal preferences and zones of comfort.

I'm not going to argue with the essence of that line, but I'll offer a perspective that some people who are quick to deploy it have not adequately considered. In Rev. 19:10 it says, "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Let me put that another way: prophecy is designed to reveal the full person and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a problem for anyone that justifies placing prophetic doctrines on the back burner so they can "focus on Jesus" instead. It's problematic for them to say, "It's all about Jesus," because their choices incriminate them. They cannot maximize their relationship with God when they refuse to wholly understand Him the way the *entire* revelation of the Bible intends for them to.

It's like having a bunch of Facebook "friends." Saying they are your friends hardly means you share the sort of bond with them that the discipline of a fully-vested relationship brings about.

I'll come full circle here and wrap it up. The 25% of Scripture which is prophetic uniquely reveals the person, plans, and purposes of Jesus Christ. As such, it was divinely-intended to be a vital part of the believer's spiritual diet. Any other choice results in spiritual malnutrition and an arm's-length relationship with our Lord and Savior.

Just as Paul realized that one's relationship with Jesus will lack a great deal of meaningful dimension if His future plans and dramatic end-time return is discounted, so we will be less effective with the good news of salvation if we do not proclaim 100% of the testimony of Jesus.

