

# The Benefit of Studying Biblical Prophecy

## Part 2

By Steve Schmutzer

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In my prior installment of this topic, I ruefully noted the not-so-uncommon reaction too many Christians have to studying Biblical prophecy. As I clarified, it's often an unsupportive response that is one part sarcasm, two parts arrogance, and altogether a disrespect of God's divine Word.

If such people would study their Bible with the reverence and teachable attitude they most need, they would be arrested by the words of 2 Peter 3:3-4. Peter issues a clear warning that one of the indications of the end times would be the arrival of "scoffers" and "mockers" who would belittle the themes of Biblical prophecy – chiefly those matters which point to and promise the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The average Christian may be inclined to feel that such attacks would come from outside the church. This has not been my experience. I've seen instead that the most strident scorers of Biblical prophecy come from within the fellowship of the body of Christ.

The higher up the food chain one goes, it seems the more potent the opposition becomes. We have prominent Christian leaders today who are so biased against the responsible study of Biblical prophecy that they've become tools of the secular culture against the fundamentals of our faith.

These so-called "Christian leaders" are made of the same stuff the Pharisees were made of. They have a veneer of virtue and righteousness, but they are a sham (Matt. 23:27). Their agenda is their own, and a proper relationship with Jesus Christ and His divine Word are not part of that. Some of these individuals will miss Jesus the second time just as their New Testament forerunners missed Him the first time.

It all goes to show that there are great benefits to the proper study of Biblical prophecy, and in Part 1 we reviewed four of those:

First, it urges us to live Godly. Seeing ourselves accurately within the present and the future exhorts us to place a priority on the Lord's return. This enables our responsible decisions in this life, and it equips our faith.

Secondly, it gives us comfort and hope. If all we had to live for were the degenerate conditions of planet earth, then we qualify for "*having no hope*" (1 Thess. 4:13). But our imminent rapture gives us immeasurable hope that the world cannot comprehend (Titus 2:13).

Thirdly, it provides a blessing. As Revelation 1:3 underscores, that blessing is the result of a right response to the prophetic Word of God. Those who do not permit the truths of Biblical prophecy to impact their lives are completely missing out.

Lastly, the study of Biblical prophecy gives us stability. There are a lot of wacko people and ideas out there. It's important to have the proper grounding in truth so as to recognize and repel the "*clever cunning of men*" (Eph. 4:14).

Already, we can see that the benefit of studying Biblical prophecy is self-evident. But there is even more to gain by engaging in the effective examination and application of the prophetic Scriptures. Here are four more reasons to do so:

### **IT IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF SPIRITUAL HEALTH**

Popular pulpit themes today emphasize fostering "Christian community," tithing, loving our neighbor, finding Jesus in our trials, showing care, and so on and so on. These approaches have their place, but churches that constantly sip their doctrines through a straw stay immature and unhealthy.

It wasn't like this in the early church. When Paul taught his "baby Christians" in Thessalonica, he didn't feed them the pabulum of socially-acceptable "devotionals." He fed them real meat. If you compare the content of 2 Thessalonians against the backdrop of 1 Thessalonians, you will find Paul emphasized the doctrines of the end times.

The early church of Thessalonica may have only been weeks or months old, but Paul used his limited time with them to teach them about the antichrist, the Day of the Lord, the Rapture, and the second coming of Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul was direct in reminding them of this. He asked in 2 Thess. 2:5, "*Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things?*"

The cowards in our pulpits today could learn much from Paul's example. Paul considered the prophetic Scriptures to be an essential part of spiritual health, and so he dispensed them up front.

### **IT AVOIDS IGNORANCE**

Paul didn't want the believers under his care to be "*ignorant*" and "*uninformed*" (1 Thess. 4:13), and so he compelled them to study and learn the prophetic Scriptures. Churches which avoid the prophetic themes of the Bible are far more "ignorant" than they think they are.

This matter takes on a critical dimension when we understand that "*...the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*" (Revelation 19:10). I'll translate. You cannot fully comprehend the person and work of Jesus Christ until you study and understand the prophecies which reveal Him."

This is an ice cold dash of water to the face of anyone who has set aside Biblical prophecy as unimportant or as the "non-essential part of God's Word." The truth is – they are showing their ignorance! They only partly know Jesus because they've chosen to partly learn of Him.

## **IT IS HELPFUL IN COUNTERACTING MATERIALISM**

This is one of those “rubber meets the road” reasons. It’s a practical reality check. Do you want that new boat? How about that *second* kitchen you’re planning to build? Do you really need 55 pairs of shoes? Why does your family of four have seven mountain bikes?

The truth is most of us have too much stuff. It clutters our lives, our closets, our garages, our storage spaces, and even our yards. It also clutters our relationships, clouds our values, and claims our heart (Matt. 6:21).

He who dies with the most toys doesn’t win anything, and he may lose something so much more important. A proper understanding of the truth that we won’t take our material possessions with us, that we don’t even own our very lives, and that it’s all going to disappear anyways (2 Peter 3:10, Luke 12:20) keeps our hearts and minds in the place they need to be.

The penitent study of Biblical prophecy reinforces to us over and over that we need to get our priorities right. It motivates us to frame our decisions with an eternal perspective. As the words of the great hymn say, “*And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of his glory and grace.*” So true!

## **IT HELPS US TO WORSHIP**

I need to be blunt here. “Worship” is not throwing up your waving arms, rolling your eyeballs back in your skull, twitching spasmodically, and divesting yourself of any conscious engagement with Biblical truth. The time of “praise and worship” in many churches today is little more than emotional frothing in a sea of peer pressure.

True worship is an issue of the heart, and its expression is seldom defined or measured by prescriptive outward antics. It is the result of encountering God and His divine truth, and subordinating one’s will to His ways. It stems from a permanent relationship rather than a passing ritual.

By its divinely-ordained nature, reverent worship follows the recognition that God has revealed Himself to us. It is only divine truth – and a right response to it (see Rev. 1:3) - which can impact our emotions so that our worship brings proper glory and honor to God.

All of God’s truth, including His absolute sovereignty in our lives, holds infinite value to the humble heart, and it is worthy of our greatest passion. It is why Job – after receiving wave after wave of traumatic news – “*fell to the ground and worshipped*” (Job 1:20). How many of us would do the same thing in response to similar pain?

I confess I’m not moved much by most praise and worship songs today. But one song hits me at my core nearly every time: “*Revelation Song*,” originally written by Jennie Lee Riddle. The words are straight out of prophetic Scripture (Revelation 4), and they are a resplendent and awesome picture of our King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Really - worship is a right response to encountering God, and the prophetic Scriptures compel us to see God in a way that is vital to our faith. As we take in the magnificence of what is yet coming, our hearts and minds are moved to deep and passionate – and true! – worship.

The themes of this article are ones I could continue expanding on for a long time, but I wish to conclude by returning to the premise that the study of Biblical prophecy has multiple and profound benefits in the life of the faithful believer. Satan knows this fact very well, and so he's done what he can to marginalize the importance of the prophetic Scriptures. Too many in the church today are heeding his seductions and abandoning the truth they need to embrace.

Sir Isaac Newton stated a long time ago, *“About the time of the end, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the prophecies, and insist upon their literal interpretation, in the midst of much clamor and opposition.”* We live in a time where his words ring true.

May the Holy Spirit graciously minister to our hearts and minds, and may we be led as faithful servants even more deeply into the wonderful truths and benefits of the prophetic Scriptures.