

Perspective

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Why Does the Bible Have Prophecy?

Much of the Bible is written in a way that most people could never understand it. Why is that? It is estimated that over thirty percent of all scripture is prophecy, and ninety percent of it applies to our time. Young Timothy, the evangelist, was admonished by the apostle Paul in II Timothy 3:16: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”* The apostle Peter taught the early church in II Peter 1:20-21, *“knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*

Many think the prophesies of the Old Testament are written by some fanatical person. Some think they only applied to the time thousands of years ago or they are done away by the New Covenant. Peter states emphatically, *prophecy never came by the will of man*. Prophecy is an outline of God’s plan being worked out on earth. It stands as a witness to humankind that God knew in advance how He would fulfill His great purpose, and at the same time prove He is God to carnal-minded human beings (Ezekiel 37:14). Prophecy is recorded history given to the prophets in advance.

Without a parable He did not speak

Many people think Jesus used parables to teach so everyone would understand. However, much of the truth Jesus Christ preached was often couched in the language of parables, and most who heard Him did not know what Jesus was saying.

Matthew 13:34-35 says: *“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’”*

This reference to Psalm 78:2 shows that Jesus’ teaching in parables was a continuation of the prophetic message, revealing deep truths hidden since the creation of the world.

Jesus Christ did not come to save the whole world at His first coming, but He did come to set the stage for that to happen (John 3:16). God has a plan for the salvation of most all of humanity. At His first coming He died for all that through His magnanimous sacrifice all would have the opportunity in their appointed time to be saved (I Corinthians 15:22-23). Right now, God is only calling the elect who are the saints mentioned in the Bible.

Jesus went about using parables deliberately as an efficient way to both prophesy about the coming kingdom and at the same time challenge those being called to raise the bar of their moral and spiritual life.

Twelve of the many parables Jesus spoke are about the future kingdom of God. He shockingly used parables to keep the truth hidden from most: *“And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given...But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.’”* (Matthew 13:10-11, 16-17)

Misconceptions about prophecy

God said in Deuteronomy 18:18: *“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”*

The Hebrew word for prophet comes from *nābîy’*, which means hidden or concealed. Prophet is defined as “a person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God.” The prophet can only predict and prophesy what God reveals to him.

Many people falsely assume all prophecies are dark and dire warnings of catastrophic events of an unmerciful God about to descend on mankind to punish him. They think prophecy is all about doom and gloom. That is patently false! A great many prophesies speak of a time of a thousand years of peace, of joy and happiness, of restoring and rebuilding waste places to live in, and bringing about great prosperity and physical

abundance and wealth for all people on earth. We do not have any of this for all people now. There are teeming millions of people around the globe who are daily without food, clothing, and shelter.

The Feast of Tabernacles spoken of in Leviticus pictures that beautiful time of global peace revealed by both the prophet Isaiah and Micah as an era when ... *"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."* (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3)

Prophecy is in many cases intended to greatly inspire us to tenaciously persevere through the hard times in obedience in pursuance of the beauty of the time to come. God wants us to know it will be well worth whatever we must endure.

Prophets were ordinary humble servants called for God's purpose

Moses was a fugitive who fled Egypt for his life. When God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt, he said, *"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"* (Exodus 3:11). He even said he was not eloquent; he was slow of speech and tongue, which may have meant he had a speech impediment. God told Moses go and *"I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."* (Exodus 4:10-11)

Elijah was from Tishbe, which often meant one was a foreigner or stranger. The only importance of this city in the region of Gilead is that Elijah came from there when God drafted him to confront Israel's King Ahab and Jezebel. Jesus considered Elijah as a highly significant prophet. And yet, Elijah fled from the wrath of Queen Jezebel (I Kings 19:2).

Jeremiah was one "of the priests" (Jeremiah 1:1), and said he was too young to become a prophet of God! Jonah ran from the call of God. Isaiah claimed he was a man of unclean lips and didn't want to prophesy. Amos sets forth his nothingness by beginning his prophecy by saying, "who was among the herdmen of Tekoa" (Amos 1:1). The Eternal called him and said, "Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos 7:14-15).

Jesus honored John the Baptist as a great prophet by saying, *"Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist"* (Matthew 11:11). John the Baptist held the honor of being called the "greatest" because he was chosen by God as the forerunner to the Messiah. John's mission was to personally prepare the world for Christ's arrival. John's ministry was predicted in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1.

The prophets came to carry a message of enduring hope to His people

Often God's people face trials because of the oppression of wicked men; in such cases they may think there is no hope of deliverance. God wants His people to know He is always watching out for them. Psalms 53:2 says, *"God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God."*

God also sees the wickedness of those who do not seek to obey Him: *"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* (Genesis 6:5)

The prophecies of the Bible provide both a warning to the wicked that God is watching what oppressors do, and an enduring hope to His people of the coming kingdom on earth when all things will be made right by Christ.

One of the reasons our Lord Jesus Christ is returning a second time is to rescue His people. God gave the prophet Isaiah this extremely hope-filled message in Isaiah 35:1-4: *"The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.'"*

There are great cataclysmic events prophesied to happen. Much is said the book of Revelation to warn sinners of what is coming. Through it all, God promises He will protect His people: *"For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone."* (Psalms 91:11-12)

Our all-powerful Father in heaven loves us. He yearns to dwell with His children. His purpose will be completed and both God and His Son will dwell with us, and we will be His people forever!