

PROPHECY – YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

Brian Orchard, October 26, 2018

As events in this world move along at a pace, there's an ever-growing interest in prophecy. We're seeing some of the parts of the puzzle come together progressively and that can lead to trying to force other parts of the puzzle together, perhaps a little prematurely as we look at events and try to make sense of them. So, we don't want to get into the position of forcing parts to come together to fit like a puzzle, but to take what is revealed and shown to us by God, progressively putting them together to make an image that is real, that is factual and in accordance with scripture and not an interpretation of man. Because we're told very clearly from Peter and there are some very standard scriptures relative to prophecy. Peter however is a very good place to start where he says:

2 Peter 1:20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, (That's clearly what we would like to try and avoid. He says:)

21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, (That's an important aspect of prophecy.) **but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**

We're going to take a look here with this particular study at some of the basics of prophecy and remind ourselves of them, because I want to move on into an important principle that, maybe, is overlooked sometimes or not used as much as it should be. And I want to get to that. It's the principle of duality. But first, I want to take some time to lay a foundation, because prophecy can be a little tricky. By that I mean, there are various parts that have to connect to bring prophecy together in the human realm.

It's like saying there are many moving parts. The more moving parts you have, the more possibility for things to go wrong. A prophecy contains a message. I think we understand that essentially. It's a message that is mostly about something that has not yet happened. Even if there is a prior fulfillment, there's a future fulfillment that has not yet happened that will have other aspects that we really can't get our hands on. And that is one of those moving parts. Because we have nothing concrete to put our hands on and to say, "This is it, then," we tend to let our minds maybe extemporize a little and try and figure out what it might mean.

The recipient of the message really has no hard facts to give support to the validity of the content. So, whatever is said in terms of a prophecy, there is a certain amount of faith that must be involved in accepting what is being said without us trying to make, as I said earlier, force fit the bits and pieces. The message that I referred to is from God. It's absolutely certain, it's absolutely clear. It is a message from God. It is a divine message or a revelation from God.

It was not presented by some powerful, miraculous way, so that there would be no doubt as to what it was and who it was coming from. The message was delivered through men, normal, average men, who God chose to deliver a message. He would move people by His Spirit to interface with people, to deliver the message He had given to them one way or another. And so, you have a human factor here. That man was called a prophet. That is the human factor in this equation.

So, let's give it a little bit of an overview here by saying that prophecy is a message inspired by God, a divine revelation. We must always keep that clearly in focus. It's not man determining for himself. It is listening to what God is telling us. As I've just mentioned, these prophets "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit from God." So, a prophet is one who receives God's message and transmits it to others. For example, we see in Acts chapter 3 this statement in verse 18.

Acts 3:18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets...

That's how God transmitted the message that He had, through the prophets. And so, the last moving part that I would introduce here is the hearers. Those who hear the message. Here is another human factor again, how they interpret what they are hearing. Do they understand it clearly without interpretation or do they try and add something to it? There are many instances in the Bible of false prophets where they do add something to the message of God that God did not intend. So, there is another moving part. And so, with all of these moving parts it's very possible to gain some distortion as far as the message that God intends His people to have, to hear.

The main Hebrew word for prophet is *nabi*. We can see that Moses, for example was a *nabi*, or a prophet. Exodus chapter 6 and verse 28, just to get a sense here of a prophet's role from somebody who was a prophet:

Exodus 6:28 And it came to pass, on the day the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt,

29 that the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the Lord. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."

There's a very clear function of a prophet. God was going to tell him some words, he was then going to go and say those words directly to Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:1 So the Lord said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

2 You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land.

Because Moses appealed to God that he felt he could not do the job well, adequately, Aaron then became the spokesman and Aaron was a prophet in the sense that he took the message and he carried it forward. It means, one speaking on behalf of the other. Aaron was authorized to speak on behalf of Moses, authorized by God to do that. With Moses God spoke directly. But with other prophets it was sometimes in visions and sometimes in dreams. In Numbers chapter 12, verse 6, we read:

Numbers 12:6 Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.

7 Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house.

8 I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?"

Because to speak against Moses was to speak against God. God spoke directly to Moses and Moses relayed that to the people. But with other prophets, He spoke to them in a vision or in a dream. A prophet was a spokesman for God. He was to announce God's word. He spoke for God and that means that we should pay very careful attention to what is being said to us through a prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:17 "And the Lord said to me: 'What they have spoken is good.

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.

19 And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.

20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'

21 And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' —

22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

So, a prophet speaks the words that God commands him and only those words. He does not add to them or take away from them. A prophecy in Hebrew is *nebuwah*. *Nabi* was the prophet, *nebuwah* is the message. It is a message. And so, a prophet announces or brings a message from God. I underline some of these things, as basic as they may seem, for us to get a little bit of a sense of respect for prophecy and not to try and make prophecy fit some preconceived idea we have. We need to have reverence and respect for prophecy, because it is of God. It is coming from God. And so, that's why I want to take just a little time to underline the importance. While I'm here, Deuteronomy 18, I'll just back up to verse 15. We started in verse 17, but let's back up to verse 15.

15 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,

This is a broader reference to a prophet than just simply talking about Moses' role as a prophet. John, in chapter 1 and verse 45 defines who is being referenced here. Again, showing some of the use of prophecy

John 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

This is a prophetic reference to Jesus Christ. And we will see here a little later that there are numerous references to Jesus Christ, prophetically speaking, in both the law and the prophets.

Jeremiah 23:28 "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord.

29 "Is not My word like a fire?" says the Lord, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"

So, we really do get a sense of the importance of prophecy. Again, just a few statements, but prophecy is very important to God because they are His words, it's His message. It's something He wants conveyed from Himself to His people and He's using a human being to do that. In Hebrews 1, verses 1 through 2, we see a little bit of an introduction here of that Prophet that was prophesied – that John said was Christ.

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, (Very clear.)

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

And so, prophecy is very important. It is accentuated by the fact that the prophets are a part of the New Testament Church. Have you ever asked yourself the question, why the foundation of the New Testament Church contains the prophets? It contains “the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” I don’t think we have any difficulty in seeing why the apostles would be part of it. But why are the prophets a part of the foundation of the New Testament Church?

Clearly the Church needs to pay attention to its foundation. It’s built upon a foundation. It’s critical. It’s important. If the role of a prophet was to announce a message from God, what relevance would that message have for the Church? Have you ever wondered about this?

Firstly, as we have noted, the message of the prophets was a message from God. There is consistency and faithfulness with God. A message from yesterday will be consistent with today and tomorrow. So, we will find the will of God expressed in prophecy. That will does not change.

Jeremiah 25:1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah (a certain time) ...

2 which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying:

3 "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the Lord has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, but you have not listened.

4 And the Lord has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear.

5 They said, 'Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.

The prophets defined God’s will and exhorted the people to repent, or to change, when their way was not in line with that will that was being expressed by the prophet as it was given by God to give to them.

Jeremiah 35:15 I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.' But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me.

A prophet’s fundamental objective was to reconcile man to God. You’ll recognize that as a New Testament theme, clearly. But, we’re just looking at this from an Old

Testament perspective here right now. Reconciliation was the objective of a prophet's role. Certainly the messages contained warnings of dire events. You could certainly focus on those events and that's where some of the end time situation gets a little iffy if we tend to want to focus on the events and say we understand the events and this is what they all mean. But the purpose of the events was to get their attention so that they would listen to the message of the prophet and return to God. That was what God was desiring. Prophecy is about bringing reconciliation of man back to God, to return to God's law, to return to being a faithful wife. God was married to Israel, to return to the covenant.

There are two major aspects to this concept of returning that I'd just like to dwell on here briefly. Both are associated with the prophets. The first one is Christ, which we've already referenced. On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was working with the disciples, stirring up the beginning here of the New Testament Church. When Peter is asked what they should do he says:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, (Well, that's what the prophets said, return, repent. But, Peter adds now) **and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

Through Christ there is remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 28 verse 23 it says – and we'll come back to this in just a moment with more scriptures around it, but just take this one statement. Paul is actually preaching the gospel. But, here is the situation where:

Acts 28:23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

So, the prophets are involved here in the basic support of who Jesus Christ was. There are many, many references to Jesus Christ, prophetically speaking, in the Old Testament. Here Paul is preaching to them about Jesus Christ and he's preaching to them from the Old Testament, from the Law and from the Prophets. Luke 24, verse 27 we see the prophets are involved in this as well:

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Christ, in teaching them who He was, used the prophets as well, of course, as the writings of Moses. The foundation for Christ was laid by the prophets. For example:

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord God (So, we're back here with a prophet, Isaiah and he is saying): "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried

stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.

17 Also I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plummet; the hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place.

18 Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with [the grave] will not stand;

This is a reference to Jesus Christ and the remission of sins through repentance that we read about in Acts. The covenant with death will be annulled because there will be forgiveness and the death penalty is removed. And the agreement with the grave will not stand because it refers to a resurrection that comes through Jesus Christ. We're reading that here in one of the major prophets of the Bible.

Jeremiah 23:5 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

6 In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Again, a reference to Jesus Christ. The prophets established Christ as Savior, the Stone upon which the Church is built. The spiritual house made possible by Christ's sacrifice. I'd like you to notice Acts chapter 13, picking it up in verse 29:

Acts 13:29 Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb.

30 But God raised Him from the dead.

31 He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.

32 And we declare to you glad tidings — that promise which was made to the fathers.

So, we go back again into the prophecies. This goes back, of course, to Abraham. Go back into Genesis 12 and Genesis 17, where there was a promise made that through his Seed all the families of the earth would be blessed, which Galatians tells us is Jesus Christ.

32 And we declare to you glad tidings — that promise which was made to the fathers.

33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.'

34 And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' (Notice where these quotes are coming from – the Old Testament.)

35 Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'

36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep (he died), was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;

37 but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

38 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;

39 and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: (A warning taken from a prophecy.)

41 'Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you.'

Again, a warning. Paul is very comfortable taking the writings of the prophets or the Psalms, as it is here, and applying it to that day and at that time, using the prophets to reinforce Christ's role.

The second thing I'd like to mention here, what we've already touched on, is the major concept of repentance being associated with prophecy. We very often think of prophecy in terms of events, because there are certain predictions about certain things that will happen; things that prophecy predicts to happen. That's exciting. That is something we would like to know more about. We'd like some kind of a timeline to know when those things might happen. So, that catches our interest. It's not wrong to think in those terms, so long as we do not overlook God's intent in issuing the prophecy in the first place. Because the intent for Israel, as we read, is no different for spiritual Israel today – the Church.

Jeremiah 3:1 "... But you have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to Me," says the Lord. (And there's the intent of the message that He will have a prophet deliver – "return to Me.")

6 The Lord said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot.

7 And I said, after she had done all these things, 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the Lord; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,' says the Lord; 'I will not remain angry forever. (Return, repent and I will forgive you and we will reestablish the relationship that we should have.)

13 Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,' says the Lord.

14 "Return, O backsliding children," says the Lord; "for I am married to you.

22 "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." "Indeed we do come to You, for You are the Lord our God.

23 Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; Truly, in the Lord our God Is the salvation of Israel.

God desired His people to return to Him in a reconciled relationship based on the terms and the conditions of their agreement that they had entered into at Mount Sinai. The events are a means to an end. The events are not the end in themselves. They are a means to an end. That is true in the past and it will be true again in the future, when some very major aspects of prophecy come together at the return of Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 4:5 Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say (that's the role of the prophet): "Blow the trumpet in the land; Cry, 'Gather together,' and say, 'Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities.'

6 Set up the standard toward Zion. Take refuge! Do not delay! For I will bring disaster from the north, and great destruction."

13 "Behold, he shall come up like clouds, and his chariots like a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are plundered!"

14 O Jerusalem, (listen to this, know this is coming but) wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?

That's what God wanted. That flows in through Jesus Christ, into the New Testament as well. And many of the prophecies that are referred to in the New Testament, taken from the Old Testament, contain exactly these thoughts and sentiments. "Wash your heart from wickedness that you may be saved." God's desire is to have a relationship with His people. It was then, and it is now. He wants to reconcile all things to Himself.

Hosea 3:1 Then the Lord said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the Lord for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans."

2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley.

3 And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man — so, too, will I be toward you."

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.

5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.

That reference to many days without a king or a prince is not a good time. It's a reference, of course, to the captivity and the loss of their identity. But, built into the foundation of the Church, through the prophets, is that the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God. God has called a group of people today to seek Him. He's made it possible through the calling of human beings to seek Him and come into a reconciled relationship with Him. That message is consistent from the prophets, it's consistent in the New Testament Church today. Our position, our role, is reinforced by the prophets. Their message resonates for us today.

Acts 28:20 For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

21 Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you.

22 But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere." (They were interested. They wanted to hear what Paul had to say. We read verse 23 already where:)

23 ...he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. (Paul preached the gospel using the prophets.)

25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

26 saying, 'Go to this people and say: 'Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you will see, and not perceive;

27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'" (So, he has quoted from the prophets. He's looking his audience directly in the eye and he says:)

28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

Paul, in preaching the gospel, used the prophets – or a message in this case – a particular prophet, Isaiah, in a message from God to Isaiah to make a point in a New Testament setting. Very clear, very accurate. No deviation from the original intent to what Paul was doing right here. In Romans 11, in a discussion here, it's a lengthy and very valuable discussion about the role of Israel in a New Testament setting.

Romans 11:26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

Of course, Israel had been, in this period of time we just read about, without a king; leaderless and wandering around. But he's reaffirming the fact that Israel will be saved because:

... "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, (Now we go back to Isaiah again, chapter 59.) and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

27 For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

So, Paul had the authority of the prophets to make strong statements. And one of those statements is right here in Romans chapter 2. Again, he says this with authority based on what he understands from the prophet's message.

Romans 2:3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Now, where might this concept and this idea be grounded?)

5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds": (And there is a quote again.)

7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;

8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath,

9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the [Gentiles];

Again, the authority of the prophets to say such a thing. God desires repentance, but He will follow through with punishment for those who don't listen. The addition of the Holy Spirit gives life to the messages that the prophets delivered. The Holy Spirit gives depth and brings out the motivation very clearly on behalf of God.

Ephesians 3:3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already,

4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ),

5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets:

The Holy Spirit takes the messages that the prophets had already delivered, which were not understood by those at that time in the spiritual sense. Now, the Holy Spirit brings it to life! We read about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It's full of meaning because the Holy Spirit has revealed to us all about Christ, His life, His purpose, His sacrifice and so on. The prophets operated before the Church, but the Holy Spirit, of course, empowered their messages to have great relevance to the Church today.

The prophet Amos carried God's message about 60 years or so, before the house of Israel went into captivity. Look at Amos 3:3 where he makes this statement:

Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

That, I think, applies to Amos certainly as a prophet. He walked with God and what he did was in agreement with God. But, I think it's also a principle that carries forward through what Amos says after this in verse 7:

7 Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

Those who are in agreement with God. God shares with them His secrets, the things that He intends to do. He lets them know so that they can take action based on that knowledge and that understanding.

8 A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

Why reveal His secrets? These are the words of Christ:

John 15:15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

The secrets are shared through the Holy Spirit with the Church, so the Church can understand the implication and the meaning of these things. Those in agreement, those in alignment with God, will know the direction God is moving things. They will see the parts of the puzzles coming together and instead of reaching out to try and find other parts to force them to fit in, they will stand back and see the overall picture that is being formed here and understand that God is relaying something of His will to us to understand.

Prophecy will alert them to the surrounding environment, so they can respond to God's desire to have a relationship with them. It's motivational, absolutely motivational for us. It's intended to be. Response is a very important aspect of being called at this time. You know exactly where I'm going by referencing chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation. We're going to the seven churches. But note what is said to each of the Churches here in turn.

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works... (Response is required.)

16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

Revelation 3:3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent...

In each case there's response. And even to the Philadelphian era, to which the word repent is not addressed, response is still required.

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. (That's a response that is required on behalf of the Philadelphian Church.)

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

All seven churches are encouraged to be responsive to Christ's directions.

2 Timothy 2:25 in humility correcting those who (are opposed to themselves, oppose themselves, they) are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, (God desires repentance and prophecy should help us understand the need to do something, to respond.)

26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

The Church needs to be awake and responsive at all times. The Church needs to be awake and responsive. The prophets play into that spiritual condition.

Jeremiah 23:20 The anger of the Lord will not turn back (God will do what He has said He will do.) until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.

“In the latter days” means exactly what we understand it to be. In the end time you will understand it perfectly. God will provide clearer knowledge and understanding in the end time. It’s like talking to Daniel. “Go your way, Daniel. This is not for you to know now.” But, at the time of the end, these things will become clearer. The wise shall understand. Those who are foolish and evil will not understand. The wise will understand. God will reveal His secrets so that there can be the action, motivation, enthusiasm, and zeal that we need at any day in our lives – at any day in our lives.

It brings us, then, to a very important point. How important is Israel to end time prophecy? Do the 12 tribes have any relevance to the prophetic end time events? What is sometimes overlooked here are the very important four words at the end of verse 1 of Genesis 49.

Genesis 49:1 And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days:

That is an absolutely clear reference to the end time, what is going to happen in the time of the end. Note what follows. All the tribes of Israel are referenced. Now, granted, there’s going to be a bit of an order here. Because, if we factor in chapter 48, where Jacob passes his name, Israel, onto Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, they become very, very important factors in the end time. And when Joseph is referenced here in chapter 49, there are very clear references that include Ephraim and Manasseh by the name being placed on them. But the point I want to make is that all twelve tribes feature in the last days. God has used Israel to convey the plan of salvation to mankind. There are no gaps in Israel’s portrayal of that plan.

It’s not like God uses them up to this point. They disappear; they’re the lost ten tribes. They’re out of sight, they’re out of mind. They’ve had a purpose as far as God is concerned. And then suddenly, back up here when Christ returns, as a restoration, and Israel appears again. There’s nothing here in the middle. That is simply not true!

Isaiah 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning...

When God called Abram, He had a plan in mind that was going to go right through the continuation of mankind right to the end.

...and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,'

13 I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off; My salvation shall not linger. And I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel My glory.

The Holy Spirit keeps the intent of the prophetic messages to Israel alive, bringing it into the New Testament Church – spiritual Israel – so the Church can observe and learn from God's continuing dealings with Israel and turn it into spiritual fuel for being awake and having a sense of urgency.

Isaiah 48:3 "I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.

4 Because I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck was an iron sinew, and your brow bronze,

5 even from the beginning I have declared it to you; before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.' (Man will be without excuse because of prophecy.)

6 "You have heard; see all this. And will you not declare it? I have made you hear new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them.

It says, "Suddenly I did them and they came to pass". Suddenly is very much an aspect of Christ's warning to His Church in the end time. A suddenness, when things come together faster than anticipated by the people in the setting where these things are happening.

Mark 13:33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

And so that concept of watch and pray, a spiritual state, flows into "Watch therefore..." of verse 35.

35 Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning —

36 lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

37 And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

The many moving parts of prophecy that we spoke of here at the beginning can be manipulated to distort the message from God. That has been a consistent factor of prophecy. Satan has seen to that from the very beginning. In this study I'm not touching on false prophets. We will maybe get to that next time. But prophecy has been problematic the way man has used it.

The more we take the human factors out of prophecy, the more clearly we will hear the word of God. What do I mean by human factors? Remove the 'will of man' factor that Peter referred to in the first scripture that we read at the beginning. It's not from the will of man and yet men like to inject their will into prophecy. The human factor includes people who will say things that God doesn't say. Remember that! Prophecy is only of value if it is the message from God and it is exactly as God said it.

Personal interpretation is a human factor. These are all the little moving parts that can distort the message. Setting dates that God doesn't set. God doesn't set dates. But He gives us broad general outlines that you can understand very clearly. The little parts of the puzzle coming together should excite us to know it's happening. It is coming together.

We say to ourselves very confidently, that this is the time of the end. Not because we want it to be the time of the end, but because we're seeing prophetic fulfillment taking place around us – more so today than 30, 40, 50 years ago. That should excite us to watch, to take heed and pray! Doing the things that spiritually we need to be doing. Failing to see the spiritual relevance of the message.... These all detract from the expression of prophecy being the will of God.

Hosea 5:8 "Blow the ram's horn in Gibeah, The trumpet in Ramah! Cry aloud at Beth Aven, 'Look behind you, O Benjamin!'

9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure. (A reference to Ephraim can refer to the ten northern tribes; Ephraim being the dominant, leading tribe.)

10 "The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark; (They change the boundaries.) I will pour out My wrath on them like water.

11 Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked by human precept. (That is what we don't want to do with prophecy. We don't want to walk by human precept.)

12 Therefore I will be to Ephraim like a moth, and to the house of Judah like rotteness.

Prophecy becomes meaningless if we evaluate it by human concepts and precepts. As we saw, Israel features in the last days. And yet, the prophets were sent to the house of Israel and house of Judah long ago. Many of what they prophesied has been fulfilled while, of course, the two houses were viable entities. You go back and you can read the prophecies. You can see the historical fulfillment of those prophecies very clearly. However, there is a vital key that we need to understand and use. That is, the principle of duality.

I think, over the years, we have gone backwards and forwards on some of these things because we went too far in one direction with prophecy. We gave it private interpretation. We did set dates. We did try and make things fit and we got our fingers burned. Then, there was sort of a “let’s swing to the other side of the ditch” situation, where prophecy is to be avoided. Even today, there are some who avoid prophecy, don’t want to talk about prophecy.

The principle of duality brings prophecy to life. It’s very, very important for us to understand. The principle of duality is simply a former fulfillment and a latter fulfillment. Most of those latter fulfillments are yet ahead of us and they are much more major fulfillments of the prophecy than the former fulfillments. Just one example, to leave you with a concept, and that is 1 Corinthians 15 where we have a first Adam and a second Adam. In verse 45 it says:

1 Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being."

All right, so there is a reference back to the first human being Adam, created as a flesh and blood human being.

... The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

So, the reference to Adam has a prior fulfillment and a future fulfillment or a fulfillment that has already been fulfilled in Christ. It says:

47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.

The principle of duality as applied to Israel is an important part of understanding end time events. But, like I said, if we go back to Genesis 49, all of the tribes of Israel are mentioned and are featured there. We may not be able to accurately identify each one of them today. Maybe they are truly lost and mingled. But, they are there, and they exist. And certain things are going to happen in the future that will involve them.

God expects us to use the message of His prophets to be spiritually alert, awake and ready. That’s very, very clear in scripture.

So, the next time that we come together for a study we will continue with the principle of duality, a vitally important principle for understanding prophecy. ♦