

PROPHETIC TRUTHS FOR TODAY

Unveiling the End-Time Events

by

John E. Dahlin

Copyright © 1961

CHAPTER TWO

THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:19-21).

I FIND a deplorable lack of emphasis in prophetic teaching and preaching in these days. This is true even in the best evangelical circles. I do not ascribe this situation to a conspiracy by these people to bypass certain areas of the Bible. It has come about through other causes, which I shall point out.

First of all, I feel that prophecy has been neglected by many ministers because they have accepted the *erroneous conclusion that the subject is speculative*, and that it leads the people into areas of uncertainty. Of course I do not share this feeling, but it serves to explain the silence pertaining to prophetic emphasis in many churches today.

A second reason for the neglect of prophetic preaching seems to stem from the *feeling that simple Gospel truth should be given priority*. In other words, the simpler truths of Scripture directed to sinner and saint should take precedence over prophecy, which is not easily understood nor assimilated.

Let me point out, however, that no one will gain spiritual stature who follows such a defeatist attitude toward major areas of the Bible.

Others have laid aside the prophetic emphasis because not so few well meaning *evangelists, Bible teachers and pastors went out on a limb, as it were, a few decades ago and dogmatically identified events and individuals in an unwarranted manner*. They substituted human opinions and sensational methods for a well-rounded or conservative presentation. Unfortunately this discredited prophetic preaching in areas where it had been formerly appreciated. Even very good preachers became silent so far as prophetic preaching was concerned.

I am certain there is a still deeper explanation for the lack of prophetic emphasis in our time.

Unquestionably it stems from the fact that *many have a deficient knowledge and appreciation of dispensational truth.*

It has become popular, it seems, *to minimize dispensational teachings.* A great deal of the Messianic elements and promises of the Old Testament, directed to God's covenant people Israel, is being applied almost in wholesale fashion to the Church. I believe this is the surest way to bewilderment and ignorance that one can pursue.

This trend is in direct conflict with the Pauline injunction to recognize the distinctions among **“the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God”** (I Corinthians 10:32).

If one recklessly intermingles these areas, without making proper distinctions, it is bound to lead to confusion. The apostle Paul speaks about **“rightly dividing the word of truth.”** This does not mean super-dispensationalism, or arbitrarily compartmentalizing the Holy Scriptures. It means, e.g., that you do not take the Sabbath and the ordinances of the Old Testament economy and apply them to the church age. Unfortunately it is popular now to *spiritualize* Old Testament truths given directly to the nation Israel and apply such truths to the Church.

WHY IS PROPHETIC EMPHASIS INDISPENSABLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY?

In the first place, more than one half of the entire Bible is given over to prophecy. In fact, if we include the descriptive as well as the predictive books, we have 21 books in the Old Testament that may be classified as prophetic. In other areas, besides these, you find a great deal of prophecy.

In the Pentateuch as well as in the Psalms you find many remarkable prophecies.

- Moreover, in the New Testament there is considerable prophecy in the Gospels, particularly in the Olivet discourse.
- In the book of Acts, and in nearly all the Epistles, there is a great deal of prophecy.
- Finally, there is the one completely prophetic book, the capstone of the Bible, namely, Revelation.

As ministers we would impoverish our churches should we gloss over or omit prophecy from our teaching and preaching responsibilities.

Again, prophetic preaching is indispensable because of its very close relationship to all other scriptural truth. Prophecy is an integral part of the entire Bible. It is a part of the warp and woof of the divine revelation. For us to seek to understand some of the Lord's parables without regarding them in the light of prophecy would simply be impossible.

Unless Genesis 3:15 is recognized prophetically, the passage would remain a conundrum to all of us. Likewise this would be true of such passages as Genesis 12:3; Psalm 22; Isaiah 9:6. And all of Isaiah 53 would be impossible to grasp unless it be taken literally as prophetic.

How could we understand the 29 expressions, “**the Kingdom of Heaven**” in Matthew’s Gospel unless we recognized their Messianic element? We would be as hopelessly confused as the Ethiopian who read from the prophet Isaiah. He first saw the light after Philip gave him the prophetic emphasis. This led to his salvation.

It might be said further, prophecy is indispensable because it is the authoritative message of God. Peter states specifically, “**Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**” (II Peter 1:20, 21). Peter admonishes us to give heed to “**the more sure word of prophecy.**”

Following the resurrection, Jesus rebuked the two disciples on the Emmaus road for being so slow to perceive what the prophets had spoken. We must never fail to recognize that prophecy is equally inspired and authoritative as all other divine truths of the Scriptures.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO PROPHETIC EMPHASIS IS TO SPIRITUALIZE THE BIBLE

This is a tragic trend in our own time. It has *become popular to spiritualize major prophetic truths*. Such a procedure violates every principle of hermeneutics and exegesis. It is not one bit better than the old allegorical method of interpretation which was so prevalent in the medieval period.

Fortunately for Protestantism Luther abandoned the allegorical method **in favor of the direct and literal interpretation**. The allegorical method had made the message of the Bible almost without value.

Let me quickly point out that you have the allegorical and symbolical elements in Scripture, but almost without exception the context or setting makes it plain whether the passage is to be taken literally or not. *Spiritual applications are always in order, but they do not serve as interpretation of Scripture.*

Amillennialists follow this path, and the Bible prophecy becomes of very little importance to them. Should I treat History and Political Science in that fashion I would not last one semester in a single college in the United States. Why should we spiritualize great concrete passages of the Scriptures when we don’t follow that path in literature, history or science? To spiritualize the great prophetic passages is *to abuse the Scriptures and handle the Word of God recklessly.*

THE INDISPENSABILITY OF PROPHECY MUST BE ASSOCIATED WITH OUR OWN TIME

Prophecy has light to offer for all of us who are living in the latter days. Peter compares prophecy to “**a light that shineth in a dark place.**” Paul refers to this age as “**the night that is far spent.**” Without the aid of prophetic truth we would be groping in the dark.

Some of you will remember that not so few religious leaders and educators, who possessed *no prophetic insight*, predicted in early 1914 that the Kingdom era was just around the corner. Postmillennialism was riding high in those days. Outwardly it appeared that every area of human life was moving in the right direction. But that very year the world was plunged into the worst war in all of history, and for four succeeding decades, there has been war and one catastrophic event following another. This confusion never came to people who were familiar with Bible prophecy. They knew the latter days would be an unprecedented time of evil, of violence and spiritual declension.

Prophecy is the golden key which unlocks for us the mysteries pertaining to the latter days. The old lamp of prophecy is needed in these dark days. *Actually prophecy is history pre-written*. It reveals the purposes of God during the ages.

Prophecy is particularly needed, for it reveals the purpose of God for the Church.

Suppose we get the notion that the assigned purpose of the Church is to convert the world. It would lead to profound discouragement.

A recent commencement speaker quoted the passage in Matthew where it is stated the Gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world and then the end will come. The same speaker admitted there were more heathen than ever before, and that we were losing ground. But he had the hope that some generation would get on the ball and preach the Gospel to every creature.

If that speaker only had taken time to see that the passage has nothing to do with the Church age, he would not have erred so grievously. Acts 15:14-15 points out that in this age God is taking out a people for His name, and the Gospel of the grace of God is to be heralded by Christ's witnesses. The conversion of the world will take place in the Kingdom age. *To evangelize men and preach the Gospel in the world is vastly different from converting the world*. The Gospel was to be given first in Judea and Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. The Commission does not imply that all individuals in any of these areas would be saved. The Gospel is to be preached in this age, but we are not commissioned to convert the world.

Finally, prophetic preaching is indispensable, *for it leads to an exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

This ought to be our greatest incentive to take up the prophetic emphasis. In Acts 10:43 we read, **"To him bear witness all the prophets."**

Referring again to the two disciples on the road leading to Emmaus, it is stated, **"He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself"** (Luke 24:25, 27). Jesus made much of prophecy. Again and again He said, **"This was done that the scripture might be fulfilled."** Moreover, He often rebuked His hearers with the words, **"Have ye not read?"** Our Lord referred to all the major prophets. The prophetic emphasis characterized His entire ministry. His last great discourse was a prophetic presentation.

The first prophecy in Genesis 3:15 and the last prediction in Revelation 22 center in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is my testimony, after preaching on prophecy for over 30 years, that in every instance where such meetings have been held, people have been blessed and enriched. I ascribe this to the fact that in prophecy there is a very special exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The “burning heart” experience of the disciples on the Emmaus road has been reproduced in meetings and conferences which I have led in scores and scores of churches in many areas, and among varied groups. Prophecy electrifies, stirs, and gladdens God’s people, for it exalts our Lord and makes clear that He will fulfill all the glorious promises given to us in the Word of God.

No one has declared the whole counsel of God until he has given proper emphasis and consideration to the sphere of Bible prophecy.

In a certain city where I came to minister, a middle-aged lady said, “I have prayed for 20 years that someone would come to this town and expound the prophetic word.” Another woman said she would order a considerable number of copies of these messages if they were in print. I believe the prophetic emphasis is imperative to the Christian ministry in our time. Let us therefore endeavor to give a balanced presentation of the prophetic truths of the Scriptures along with the other vital truths revealed by God.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
