



LESSON 59

Prophecy

“God’s Word is our primary weapon in evangelism. It is not designed to destroy life, but to give it. It is not to be used to harm but, like a surgeon’s scalpel, to save. Just as a builder knows his tools and an artist knows his brushes and pens, we need to know the Bible.”

GREG LAURIE

Kirk’s Comment

Many people believe that Jesus was a good man, but either He was more than a good man (He was God) or He shouldn’t be listened to at all. Messianic prophecy provides the evidence to prove that Jesus was God in human flesh.

QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

“The Bible calls God ‘the God of peace’ who tells men to ‘beat their swords into plowshares’ (Romans 15:33; Isaiah 2:4). It also calls Him ‘a man of war’ who says to ‘beat your plowshares into swords’ (Exodus 15:3; Joel 3:9,10). Which is correct?”

There is peace inside of God’s kingdom. He desires His enemies to be reconciled to Him so they have peace with Him. But if they refuse, then they are subject to His judgment. The passage from Joel is referring to Judgment Day. Note Joel 3:12, which says, “Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the



Psychics Have Made Predictions Like the Bible

Contemporary critics of biblical prophecy nominate psychic predictions for equality with Scripture. However, there is a quantum leap between every psychic and the unerring prophets of Scripture.

The test of a true prophet was whether he ever uttered predictions that did not come to pass (Deuteronomy 18:22). Those who had even one prophecy fail were put to death (18:20), a practice that no doubt gave pause to any who were not absolutely sure whether their messages were from God. Despite hundreds of biblical prophecies, prophets of God are not known to have made a single error.

A study of prophecies made by psychics in 1975 and observed until 1981 showed that of the seventy-two predictions, only six were fulfilled in any way. Two of these were vague and two others were hardly surprising: the U.S. and Russia would remain leading powers and there would be no world wars. In 1993 the psychics missed every major unexpected news story, including Michael Jordan's retirement, the Midwest flooding, and the Israel-PLO peace treaty. Among their false prophecies were that the Queen of England would become a nun, and Kathy Lee Gifford would replace Jay Leno as host of "The Tonight Show" (*Charlotte Observer*, Dec. 30, 1993).

Likewise, the highly reputed "predictions" of Nostradamus were not amazing at all. Contrary to popular belief, he never predicted either the place or the year of a great California earthquake, New York being attacked, or the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Only those who are ignorant of Bible prophecy will be impressed with Nostradamus. He read the Bible in secret, stole its prophecies, and claimed them as his own. The majority of his "famous" predictions, such as the rise of Hitler, were vague. Like other psychics, he was frequently wrong, and would be considered a false prophet by biblical standards. (For more information, see my audio message *Nostradamus*, available at www.livingwaters.com.)

Sylvia Browne, a popular psychic who claims her accuracy is close to 90 percent, performed "readings" in criminal cases. In examining 115 cases, researchers found her confirmable accuracy to be 0 percent. While on a television show in 2004, she told the mother of Amanda Berry that her daughter was dead. When Amanda was found alive almost a decade



later, Browne admitted her fallibility but asserted that she had “been more right than wrong.” She then added, “Only God is right all the time.”

When Were Biblical Prophecies Made?

Critics dismiss all biblical prophecies that are specific enough to be unexplainable by claiming that they were made after the events. Supposedly, Daniel’s amazing statements were made quite late, and Isaiah’s predictions about Cyrus were edited in after he arrived on the scene. They were therefore recording history, not uttering prophecies.

Neither these nor other charges of post-dated prophecies have any foundation in fact. Many fulfillments have occurred long after the writings are known to have existed.

Alleged Fulfillments Misinterpret the Texts

Critics also argue that the alleged fulfillments of Old Testament predictions are frequently misinterpretations of the Old Testament text. For example, Matthew repeatedly says “that it might be fulfilled.” However, when the Old Testament passage is examined in context, they claim, it turns out that it was not a real prediction of the event to which Matthew applied it.

A case in point is Matthew 2:15, which says, “And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my Son.’”

When the Old Testament passage, Hosea 1:11, is examined, it is discovered that this is not a predictive prophecy about Jesus coming out of Egypt when He was a child, but a statement about the children of Israel coming out of Egypt at the exodus.

It is readily admitted that many “prophecies” are not solely predictive and that the New Testament applied certain Old Testament passages to Christ that were not directly predictive of Him. Many scholars speak of these Old Testament texts being “topologically fulfilled” in Christ; that is, some truth in the passage is appropriately applied to Christ, even though it was not directly predictive of Him.

Others speak of a generic meaning in the Old Testament passage, which applies both to its Old Testament reference (Israel) and the New Testament reference (Christ), both of whom were God’s “Son.” Some scholars describe this as a double-reference view of prophecy.



Numerous Old Testament passages, however, are not merely typological but are manifestly predictive, such as the time and place of Christ's birth and death.

In summary, the Bible is filled with specific predictive prophecies that have been literally fulfilled. In *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecies*, J. Barton Payne calculated that 27 percent of the entire Bible contains predictive prophecy. This is true of no other book in the world. And it is a sure sign of its divine origin.

QUESTIONS

- 1. What other books, besides the Bible, contain numerous precise prophecies that have come to pass?**
- 2. How could one know if a prophet was truly from the Lord, according to Deuteronomy 18?**
- 3. What percentage of the Bible contains predictive prophecy?**
- 4. What are some examples of failed predictions by modern "psychics"?**
- 5. Why is prophecy a good tool to use in evangelism?**



WORDS OF COMFORT

One thing that amazes me is the timing of Murphy's Law. Take for instance the time Sue and I were mailing hundreds of copies of a newspaper we published. The only way we could transport such a large number was in two large trash bags. It was a holiday. No one was around, so it didn't matter if we used trash bags to transport them.

As we took handfuls of the papers out of the bags and stuffed them into the Post Office mailbox, a parade of local veterans turned a corner and marched by. It must have looked like we had found a quick and easy way to get rid of our trash.

On another well-timed occasion, I had just tried out a lawn mower that one of our neighbors loaned us. If we thought the mower did a good job on our front lawn, they would sell it to us at a reasonable price.

I wasn't too impressed with its performance. It was large and heavy. Sue could see that I was having difficulty with the huge machine. Thinking that perhaps there was a knack to handling it, she asked if she could try it for a moment.

I gave my petite 4'11" spouse the reigns and stood back on the sidewalk to see how the lawn looked so far. At that very moment, a woman from our church walked by. She smiled awkwardly as she glanced at my laboring wife, then back at me as I casually stood on the sidewalk and watched her work.

Memory Verse

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privately shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

2 PETER 2:1

Last Words

George Whitefield (1714–1770), whose name will live forever in the annals of evangelism, was a co-worker of the Wesleys before he settled in America. His name still stands as a synonym for the most marvelous exhibitions of pulpit eloquence. Dying the death of a righteous man, Whitefield uttered this prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I am weary *in* Thy work, but not *of* Thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal the truth, and come home to die."