

THE BASICS OF BIBLE PROPHECY

Study Guide

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This course on **Bible Prophecy** will attempt to cover some of the major areas of emphasis found in the Word of God concerning prophecy. Several books that will be helpful (though not required) are as follows:

“Things To Come”

J. Dwight Pentecost

“The Second Coming of Christ”

Clarence Larkin

“The Days of Noah”

M. R. DeHaan

“The Jew and Palestine in Prophecy”

M. R. DeHaan

✓ *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*

✓ *Bible Dictionary*

List of Assignments:

- ✓ **Read all books assigned by your instructor.**
- ✓ **Using Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and / or the textbook, "Things To Come" by J. Dwight Pentecost, define the terms below.**
If you are unable to use the textbook assigned for this part of the course, you may find a Bible dictionary to be a helpful resource.
- ✓ **Give two Scripture references for each term that you define.**
Some words are not found in the Word of God, but the teaching associated with that word is definitely a part of Scripture. (Example - "*Rapture*"- while the word itself is not in the Bible, the Scriptures do teach that the believers in Christ who are living at the time of His return will be "caught up", i.e. *raptured*.)

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|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Eschatology | 14. Parousia |
| 2. Prophecy | 15. Advent |
| 3. Rapture | 16. New Heaven / New Earth |
| 4. Revelation | 17. Final Revolt of Satan |
| 5. Apocalypse | 18. Marriage of the Lamb |
| 6. Antichrist | 19. Seven - Sealed Book |
| 7. False Prophet | 20. Pre-Millennialism |
| 8. The Beast | 21. Post-Millennialism |
| 9. The Tribulation | 22. A-Millennialism |
| 10. Judgment Seat of Christ | 23. New Jerusalem |
| 11. Armageddon | 24. First Resurrection |
| 12. Millennium | 25. 144,000 |
| 13. Great White Throne | |

- ✓ **Read the books of DANIEL and REVELATION**

- ✓ **Prepare a chapter-by-chapter outline of both DANIEL and REVELATION.**

- ✓ **Prepare a 750-word essay on “Why I Believe Jesus Christ Is Coming Again”.** Please use Scripture references in your paper. This should be a typed essay paper.

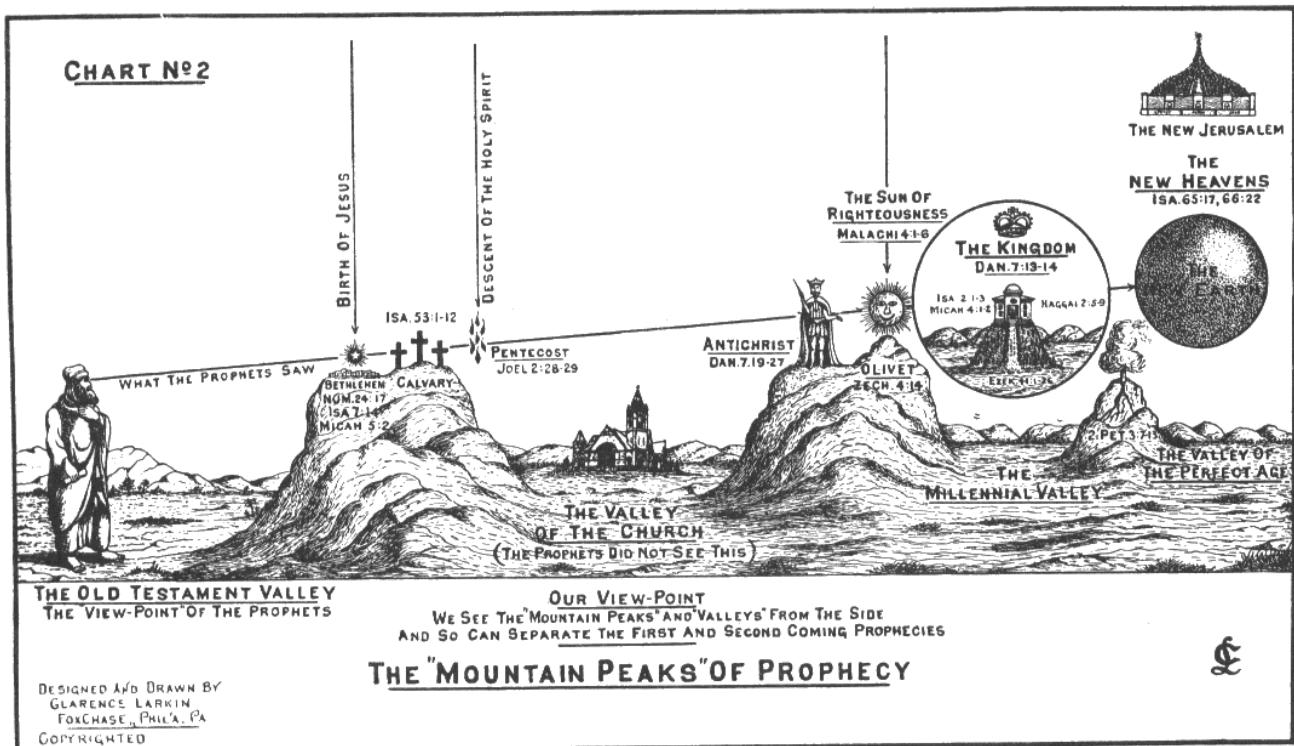
- ✓ **Prepare a Gospel tract emphasizing the Second Coming of Christ.** Design, draw, type, cut, fold, etc. - whatever is necessary to produce a rough copy of the tract. The top tracts will be used to produce other tracts for distribution.

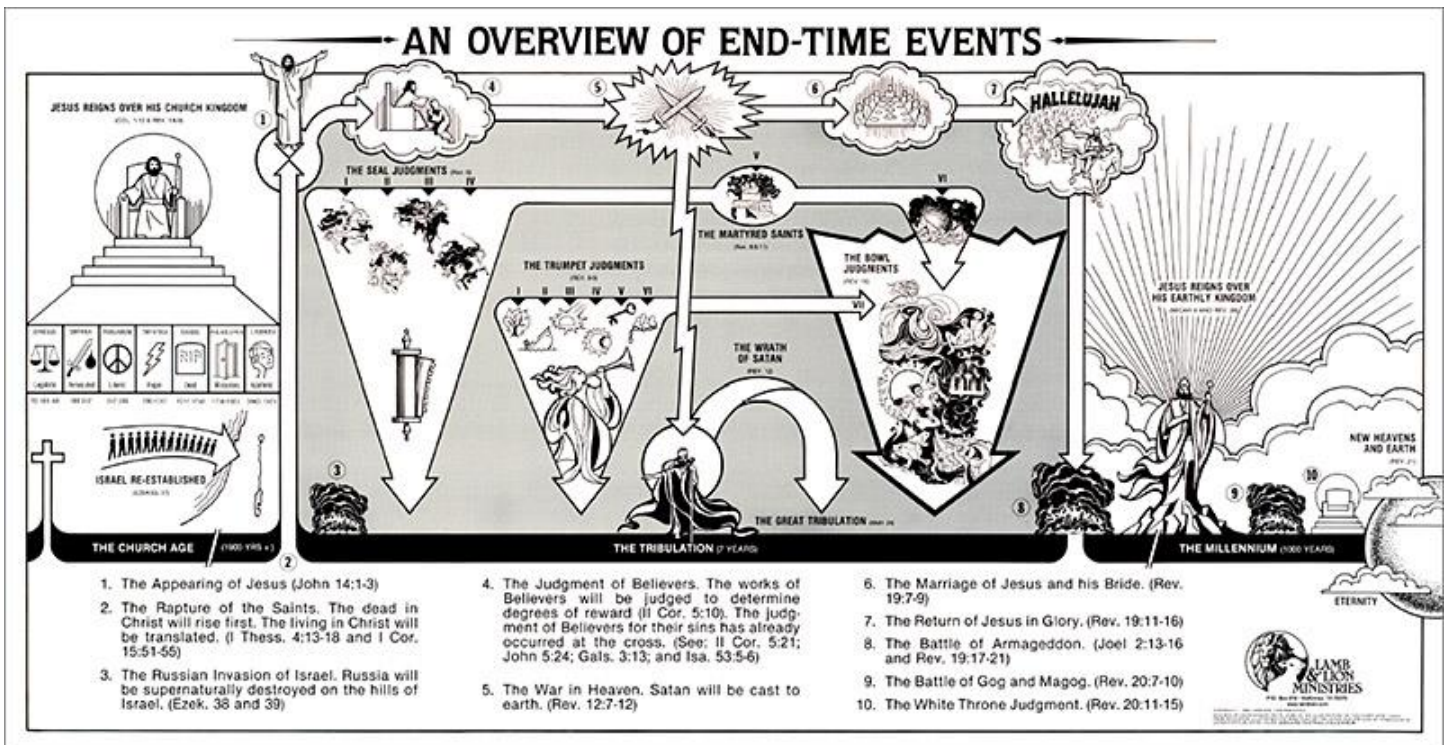
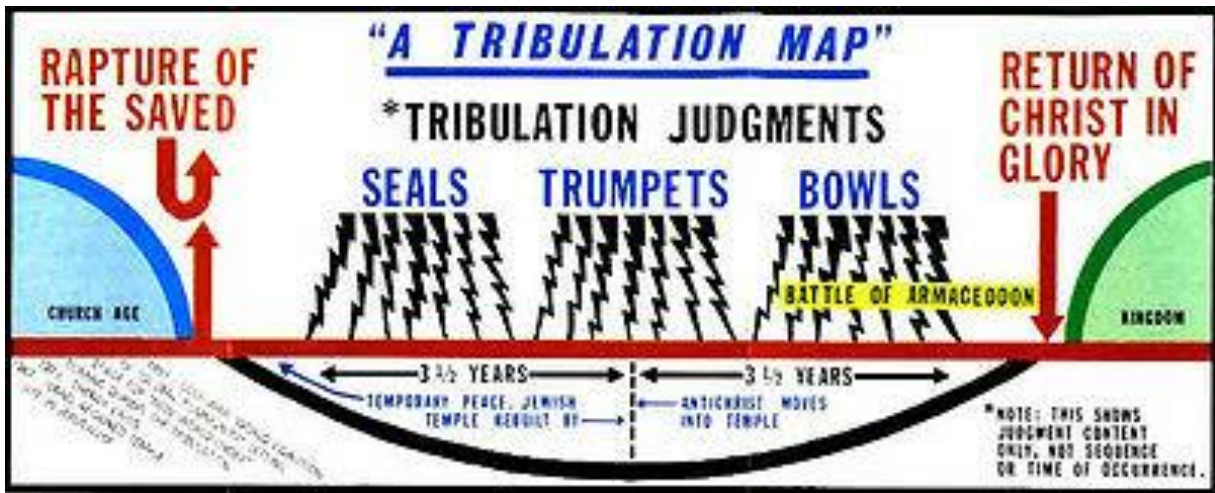
- ✓ **List 10 major current events that have helped prepare the world for the return of Christ.**

✓ Memorize the Seven churches of the book of Revelation:

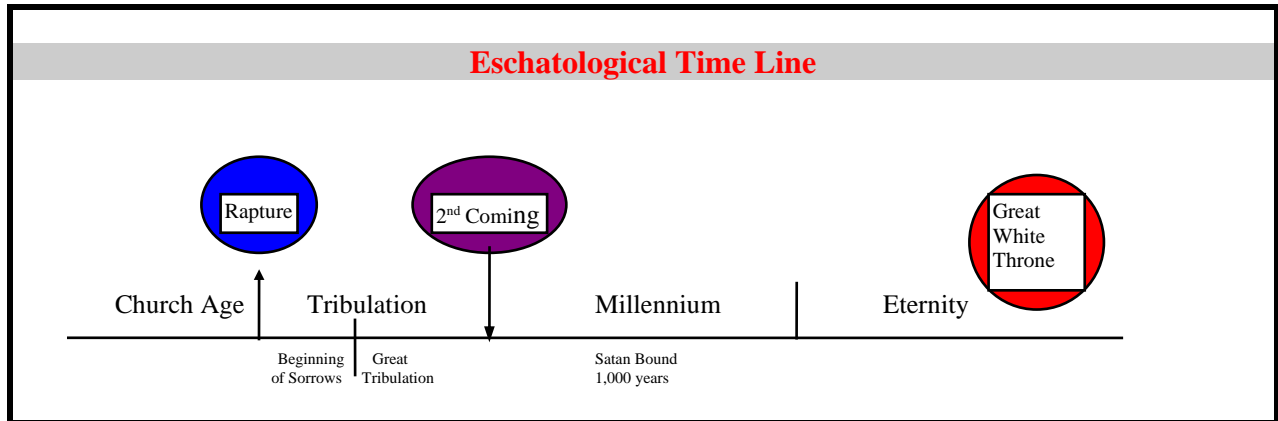
- Ephesus
- Smyrna
- Pergamos
- Thyatira
- Sardis
- Philadelphia
- Laodicean

✓ If attending classes, please keep a notebook of the class lectures.





Prepare a diagram or chart that could be used to explain Biblical events relating to prophecy; (a chart is provided below to give an idea of what is required. You may include more events than are listed below:)



Why Study Prophecy?

In these days, when people are searching for meaning and truth, for purpose and hope, I can think of no better source for guidance than the Holy Scriptures. In *2 Timothy 3:16-17*, Paul writes that all of God's Word is "*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*". That includes God's prophetic Word. God intends that we understand the contents of the prophetic Word and that it will have a bearing upon the practical decisions we Christians make.

Within the pages of the Scriptures, we find the Word of God, speaking to us as clearly as He spoke to His Twelve original disciples and we modern-day disciples know that we, too, must hear the Word of God and be about His business. To put it simply, we study the Bible because we want and need to know what God is calling and telling us to do.

Prophecy is a Validator of Scripture

"And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." [2 Peter 1:19]

Fulfilled prophecy is one of the best evidences that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Bible contains hundreds of fulfilled secular prophecies pertaining to cities, nations, empires, and individuals. No other book in all the world has a record like this.

The literal fulfillment of its prophecies demonstrates that Biblical prophecy is accurate.

Prophecy reveals our Lord as He really is.

"For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." [Revelation 19:10]

There is no reason for prophecy to divert anyone's attention away from Jesus. In fact, it should serve to emphasize the centrality of Jesus. Biblical prophecies about Jesus Christ begin in Genesis with the Garden of Eden and climax in the last book of the Bible, with its theme "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." The Bible contains more than 300 prophecies about the first coming of Jesus, all of which were literally fulfilled. Every aspect of the life of Jesus was prophesied - the place of His birth, the nature of His birth, the quality of His ministry, the purpose of His life, and the agony of His death. The literal fulfillment of so many prophecies in the life of one individual transcends any mere coincidence and serves to validate that Jesus was who He said He was - the divine Son of God.

With even greater detail, God wrote an "address" in history to single out his Son, the Messiah, the Savior of mankind, from anyone who has ever lived in history - past, present, and future. The specifics of this "address" can be found in the Old Testament, a document written over a period of 1,000 years which contains over 300 references to his coming. Using the science of probability, we find the chances of just forty-eight of these prophecies being fulfilled in one person to be only one in ten raised to the 157th power!

The task of matching up God's address with one man is further complicated by the fact that all the prophecies of the Messiah were made at least 400 years before he was to appear. Some might disagree and say that these prophecies were written down after the time of Christ and fabricated to coincide with his life. This might sound feasible until you realize that the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, was supposedly translated around 150-200 B.C. This Greek translation shows that there was at least a two hundred-year gap between the prophecies being recorded and their fulfillment in Christ.

Certainly God was writing an "address" in history that only the Messiah could fulfill. There have been approximately forty major claims by men to be the Jewish Messiah. But only one - Jesus Christ - appealed to fulfilled prophecy to substantiate his claims, and only his credentials back up those claims.

The study of prophecy promotes an evangelistic church.

Prophecy can be used as a very effective tool of evangelism, as illustrated in the story of Philip and the Eunuch (Acts 8:26ff). Philip used Isaiah's great suffering lamb passage (Isa. 53) to teach that Jesus is the lamb who was slain for the sins of the world. Matthew and Peter both used fulfilled prophecy in the life of Jesus as one of their basic evangelistic tools (see 2 Peter 1:16-19).

Prophecy offers confident hope in a hopeless age.

The world is drowning in discouragement and uncertainty. Whether people are talking about the economy, politics, the Middle East, crime, drugs, or even the weather, most people feel as though they have lost control of their destiny. We need not be frightened by events shaping up in our world if we know Jesus as Lord and Savior and know His promises contained in the Bible. God has given us glimpses of the future to remind us that He is in control. Evil might flourish for now but we can know that Satan and his demons will be thrown into the lake of fire at the end, the church might be apostate now but in the end the true and faithful church will be taken to heaven to rule with Christ.

We do not need to be overly alarmed or discouraged. Rather, we can have joy because we can know the outcome. We've read the last chapter, the last page. We know the outcome and we know who wins!

The study of prophecy tends to purify the believer.

It's practical relevance is attested to in that all the New Testament writers testify to the fact that the study of prophecy will motivate holy living. And what could be more practical than that? It is easier to resist temptation when you know what your actions will ultimately bring. By describing both the destruction of earth and the glories of heaven, God motivates us to "lay up treasures in heaven" rather than live for earthly pleasures.

The Bible states in 1 John 3:2, 3, "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*" We have been predestined "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29), because when He comes again, He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). He will "make all things new" again (Revelation 21:5). Although the Bible does not say specifically, perhaps this means that those who died in old age will be made young again, and those who died in infancy will grow to vigorous maturity, so that all who are Christ's "*shall be like him.*" The hope of Christ's second coming is not a dead hope, but a "*lively hope*" (1 Peter 1:3); not a frightening prospect, but a "*blessed hope*" (Titus 2:13). It is a joyful hope (1 Thessalonians 2:19), a comforting hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), a hope of glory (Colossians 1:27) and an anchoring hope (Hebrews 6:19). Finally, as this verse notes, it is a purifying hope, for it stimulates us to abide in Him.

A proper understanding of prophecy arms the believer against false prophets.

Those who study biblical prophecy will have less difficulty distinguishing balanced from unbalanced teaching than will those who do not search the Scriptures.

In Peter's second epistle, he warns that one of the signs of the end times will be the appearance of "*scoffers*" who will cast scorn and ridicule on the promise of our Lord's return (2 Peter 3:3ff). The great tragedy of our day is that many of the loudest scoffers are religious leaders who profess to follow Christ.

In mainline and liberal church culture, prophecy language is only remotely understood - if at all. Many who claim the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible are really only attempting to justify their own interpretation as being 'true.' Christians who hold certain millennial theologies gather around them those who teach their own views and readily reject other views. They refuse to look at evidence that challenges their own view and are "blinded" to the truth.

The very essence of truth does not allow for multiple interpretations.

That's a variation of the New Age lie, *i.e.* - "*there are many ways to God.*" Only one can be true. Cults and many denominations are founded on their own brand of truth. Such leaders crucified Jesus the first time He came and they now scoff at His promise to return.

The study of prophecy brings about a life-change.

The Bible is relevant to all of life and for those who read it and heed it, it changes their lives. When you begin your study of prophecy, you may have a goal of simply gaining a better understanding of an apparent esoteric subject. What you will eventually gain is something you never planned for - an increased feeling of urgency. You will begin to discover the relevance of the Bible for current life. Through the pages of Scripture you will read about how problems developed, their impact on society, and the outcome. You will become more aware of the relationship of contemporary issues to the larger picture of humankind and ultimately eternity.

Some of the results in your life from the study of prophecy might include:

- ✓ Awakening to the life and death issues surrounding the value and sanctity of life.
- ✓ The dangers of false teachings resulting in apostasy.
- ✓ Recognizing the cultural influences of the “broad” road to a degeneration of lifestyle.
- ✓ Your own personal responsibility of maintaining a righteous, moral lifestyle.

INTRODUCTION TO ESCHATOLOGY

THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

Every study of doctrine must have its eschatology. That which has a beginning must also have its end. The study of eschatology has been commonly divided into two parts:

***General Eschatology** -The study of the future of the world

***Personal Eschatology** -The study of the future of individuals

I. THE MEANING OF ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology means the theology of last things. That study can cover all things that were future at the time of their writing, or it can include only those things which are still future from our present vantage point. It deals with the consummation of all things, both those things which relate to individuals and to the world.

Everyone has some sort of eschatology. For many moderns, eschatology is a study in despair, for all things will end in death-the death of the individual and the death of the universe. Even evolution does not promise immortality. For others the despair is modified by a vague hope in some sort of life after death. For the Christian the Bible provides clear and detailed teaching concerning the future so that he may know with certainty what lies ahead.

II. THE SCOPE OF ESCHATOLOGY

The study of last things (those which are yet future from our viewpoint) includes the biblical teaching concerning the intermediate state, the resurrections, the Rapture of the church, the second advent of Christ, and the Millennium.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESCHATOLOGY

The study could be developed in a number of ways. One would be to separate the future for the individual from the future for the world. Another would be to catalog the future for the church, the future for Israel, the future for Gentiles, and the future for the world. Another approach might study the various teachings in their chronological order. A biblical theology approach would study the eschatology of the Old Testament, the eschatology of Jesus, the eschatology of Paul, the eschatology of John, etc.

No one method is necessarily superior to another. Most writers seem to combine various approaches, and so shall I. Some of the topics like resurrection will be discussed from the individual viewpoint. Others, like the Tribulation will be outlined chronologically. The three basic approaches to eschatology, premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism, need to have a more systematic treatment in order to see their distinctive approaches as a whole. Because of the contemporary debate concerning the relation of the Rapture of the church to the Tribulation, this will need special attention.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF ESCHATOLOGY

Because there is much divergence in this area of doctrine, and because some things are not crystal clear, some assume that eschatology should be given a lesser importance than other areas of biblical truth. Is there any area of doctrine that has not been debated? Think of the Trinity, or the nature of the person of Christ, or church government, or predestination, or eternal security, or the effects of Adam's sin. And think of some of the difficult concepts to interpret in these areas, concepts like the tri-unity of God, Deity and humanity united in one Person, the meaning of only begotten, the concept of imputed sin, etc. Yet we do not, nor should we, shy away from a detailed study of these teachings. Similarly we must not slight what the Bible says about the future.

V. THE BLESSING OF ESCHATOLOGY

For the believer, the knowledge of prophecy:

- (a) provides joy in the midst of affliction (2 Cor. 4:17)
- (b) cleanses and encourages holy living (1 John 3:3)
- (c) is profitable, like all Scripture, for a number of important needs in the Christian's life (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- (d) gives facts about life after death (2 Cor. 5:8)
- (e) gives truth about the end of history
- (f) gives proof of the reliability of all Scripture, for the number of prophecies that have come to pass precisely as predicted cannot be accounted for by chance but only by God
- (g) draws our hearts out in worship to the God who is in complete control and who will accomplish His will in history.

To slight prophecy is to miss these benefits.