

Following Christ: Prophecy



Slice F13

Prophecy

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1 Memory Verse

Isaiah 46:9–10 (NIV)

9 Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.

10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'



2 The Benefits of Studying Bible Prophecy

Many Christians are comfortable with never studying Bible prophecy and are content to believe that, as Jesus is in control, everything will 'pan out.' These Christians miss out on the many benefits of learning about prophecy:

- Prophecy plays a leading role in the New Testament: Out of the 216 chapters in the New Testament, there are 313 references to the return of Jesus. In Luke 12:56, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for not knowing Biblical prophecy.
- Prophecy proves the integrity of Scripture: Theologians state that Jesus, conservatively, fulfilled at least 300 prophecies in His earthly ministry.
- Prophecy protects us from false teaching: Scripture continually warns us of the increase in apostasy in the Church in the End Times.
- Prophecy prepares us for the Last Days and the return of Jesus: Believers must always be prepared for the return of Jesus at the rapture. We are required to be eternally minded.
- Prophecy encourages a believer to righteous everyday living, with the believer having firm confidence that the Lord is in control of *all* circumstances.

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- Prophecy promises spiritual blessing: The book of Revelation promises a blessing to those who read and try to understand the book.

The last book in the Bible is the book of Revelation and the title actually means 'the unveiling of that which was previously hidden or unknown.' Prophecy must be seen as God's gift to the Church, allowing us an understanding of His future plans and purposes for mankind.

3 The Importance of Prophecy

- It is a revelation that God is the true God and His Word is the truth:

Isaiah 46:9–10 (NIV)

9 Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.

10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'

- Prophecy shows God's power and authority; He does what He pleases and continually fulfils His will.
- Prophecy is the full gospel message - we are all commissioned to be watchmen.
- Prophecy helps us interpret world events.
- Prophecy focuses our prayers - prophecy is for participation, not for passivism.
- Prophecy assures us that God will avenge the unjust persecution of the righteous.
- Prophetic material equips the saints to refute those who mock the Christian faith.
- Prophecy is a tool for evangelism.
- Prophecy gives motivation for holy living (eternally minded).
- The study of prophecy encourages patient endurance during trials.

4 Replacement Theology

A prominent doctrine within the Church is Replacement Theology (Supersessionism). Although it is seldom taught openly from the pulpit, most denominations hold to the belief. The doctrine has a marked influence on End Times beliefs as it rejects a Millennial Kingdom rule. The fact that Replacement Theology is a very prominent doctrine within the Church may be traced back to Emperor Constantine (280-337 BC). The doctrine is the belief that the Church has 'replaced' the Jews in God's divine will and is incorrectly believed to be the new spiritual Israel. The term *Supersessionism* is often used, as the proponents teach that the Church has superseded Israel. Those who hold to Replacement Theology believe that the Jews are no longer God's chosen people and, therefore, all the promises God made to the Jews now belong to the Church. So, for Supersessionists, the Jew does not play any unique part in God's future plans. Their eschatological (End Times prophecy) view, therefore, rejects the literal interpretation of scripture, preferring

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instead to spiritualise the prophecies. An example would be in the book of Revelation, where John prophesies that there will be a thousand-year rule by Jesus on earth. This is spiritualised by Replacement Theology to be the Church period and the rule of Jesus in the hearts of believers.

Throughout Christian history, this rejection of the Jews has provided the basis for ethical problems within the Church, becoming the seed for all forms of anti-Semitism. Examples of this would be anti-Semitic intolerance, persecution, pogroms (an organised massacre of a particular ethnic group), and genocide (extermination of an entire ethnic group). In his first letter, the apostle John informs us of the existence of 'the spirit of the antichrist'. The church needs to recognise that Replacement Theology is the spirit of the antichrist at work within the church; a false doctrine working to inhibit God's restoration plan for both Jews and Gentiles. Our Jewish Messiah is not going to return for a bride who is stained by the contamination of Replacement Theology. This doctrine has been responsible not only for rejecting His family and claiming the rights that belong to them, but also for the numerous and continuing great atrocities against His covenant people.

Table showing the number of End Times theories spawned by Replacement Theology

Literal and Israel	Replacement Theology Allegorical/Spiritual and no Israel
Pre-millennial– Rapture, Tribulation, Millennial Kingdom.	Amillennial– No Millennial Kingdom.
	Post-millennial– Church saves the world.
	Historicism– Revelation fulfilled in history.
	Preterism – Revelation fulfilled in AD 70.
	Poeticism - neither past nor future actualities, but as purely symbolic accounts, dealing with the ongoing struggle and ultimate triumph of good over evil.

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5 Eschatology of the Early Church Fathers

The contamination of scripture by Greek philosophy is easily seen in the study of eschatology (study of Last Days prophecy), taking it out of the realm of literal interpretation and into the spiritualising of End Time prophecies. Bible scholars recognise that the early church fathers who lived after the apostles held to a literal interpretation of prophecy, believing that:

- Christ would physically return to earth and there would be an earthly reign of Christ.
- They hoped in a bodily resurrection of believers.
- The Second Coming is an imminent hope (Maranatha).
- The visible appearance of Jesus Christ at the Second Coming.
- An eschatological (future) Antichrist is a real person.
- The time of the judgment of the unsaved would be during the Second Advent.

6 Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism answers the question, 'why didn't Jesus come to earth and die for mankind after the fall of Adam and Eve?' The reason for this is that God wanted to show that mankind could not attain righteousness on their own. Mankind failed to restore their relationship with God because they were governed by their conscience, they established their own laws to govern society, even when God gave mankind the laws He would require them to follow. Having exposed mankind's inability to attain righteousness, Jesus was then able to do the work for us. He is the perfect sacrifice that opens the door to God's Grace.



Dispensationalism is a theological system that recognizes ages ordained by God to order the affairs of the world. Dispensationalism has two primary distinctives 1) a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture, especially Bible prophecy, and 2) a view of the uniqueness of Israel as separate from the Church in God's program. So, when the Bible speaks of "a thousand years" in Revelation 20, dispensationalists interpret it as a literal period of 1,000 years (the dispensation of the Kingdom), since there is no compelling reason to interpret it otherwise.

John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) was a founder of the Plymouth Brethren Church, an author, and an influential proponent of a dispensational view of Scripture.

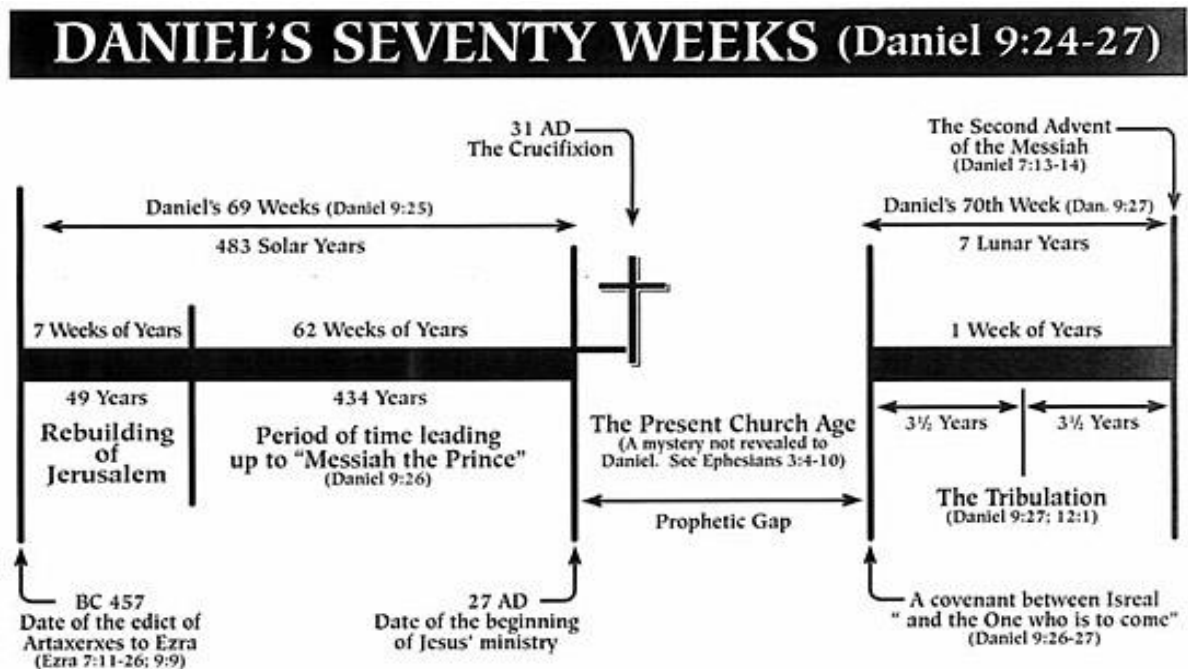
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7 Daniel's Seventy Weeks

The book of Daniel is a powerful prophetic book, and it is extremely important to understand the prophecies in Daniel before attempting to interpret the book of Revelation. Daniel 9 is an example of foundational prophetic writing, on which the book of Revelation is built:

Daniel 9:24-27 (ESV)

24 "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. **25** Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time. **26** And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. **27** And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."



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7.1 The Final 'Seven'

Daniel 9:26–27 (KJV 1900)

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall **Messiah be cut off**, but not for himself: and the people of **the prince that shall come** shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

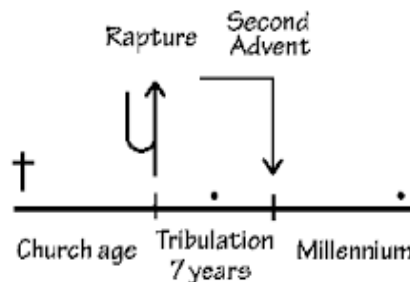
27 And **he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week**: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Daniel 9:26-27 reveals three extremely important points:

1. The Messiah will die before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.
2. The prince who shall come is the Antichrist and his people are Romans.
3. The Antichrist will make a peace treaty with Israel for a seven-year period, the last week of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy - the Tribulation.

8 The Tribulation

Pretribulational Rapture



In Daniel 9:27, Daniel warns of a ruler of great standing who will initiate a covenant with Israel. This will apparently be a peace treaty for a duration of seven years. However, in the middle of the seven-year period, the ruler will break the covenant, ending the Temple sacrifices and placing a statue of himself in the Temple as an object of worship (Dan. 9:27b; Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13:14-15). The 'ruler' Daniel refers to in his prophecy must, therefore, be the Beast of Revelation 13 - the Antichrist, the seed of Satan. The erection of the idol in the Temple is an abomination to the Jews and will signal the end of the covenant they have with him. The Great Tribulation (The last 3½ years [Matt. 24:21]) will then commence. Because of the focus on the Jews during this time, it is also referred to as 'the time of Jacob's trouble' (Jer. 30:7).

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9 The Rapture

The rapture is an amazing revelation of the great love Jesus has for His bride the Church. We the Church, 'the Bride of Christ,' should be responding to Jesus with that same love, which includes a yearning to be with Him. A Bride longs for the day of her wedding, a time when she will, at last, be truly bound to her husband in a union of love. This is the emotion our Lord Jesus expects from His Bride, the Church. This will be in line with, but never matching, His great love for us, His Bride - the body of people He died for. Jesus longs for the time when we will be with Him to rule and reign with Him. The rapture must be understood from this perspective: a bride is being called out to be with her bridegroom for the marriage ceremony.

A short definition is needed for those who are unsure of exactly what the rapture. The word 'rapture' does not appear anywhere in the various English Bible translations. However, the word 'rapture' was introduced into the English language by Protestants who took the word from the dominant Bible of the pre-Reformation Church, Jerome's Vulgate, a Latin translation of the original Greek New Testament. The word 'rapture' is taken from the statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, where Paul explains that believers will be 'caught up... to meet the Lord in the air'. The Greek word explaining the act of being 'caught up' is *harpazo*, which means 'to be grasped hastily', to be snatched up. The Greek word *harpazo* translated into Latin is *raepitius*. This eventually became the term used today - 'rapture', which signifies the believer being caught up to be with Jesus in the air for the marriage supper and the union of Jesus with His Church.

The event is described in detail in both 1 Cor. 15:50-57 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18:

1 Corinthians 15:51–54 (NIV)

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—**52** in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. **53** For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. **54** When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (NIV)

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

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9.1 Rapture Theories

There are four main theories regarding the timing of the rapture. They are:

- Pre-Tribulation - before the start of the Tribulation.
- Mid-Tribulation - before the 'abomination of desolation.'
- Pre-Wrath - before the Trumpet judgments.
- Post-Tribulation - at the end of the Tribulation.

The important distinction between a pre-Tribulation rapture and the other three theories is that the last three will only occur *during* the Tribulation. So, instead of warning the unsaved of the imminent coming of Jesus and the judgment of the Tribulation, the followers of the last three theories are preparing for a time of Tribulation. They become 'preppers,' having a survivalist mentality, because they believe the Lord will require them to witness to the unsaved and to Israel during the Tribulation. This is exactly what Satan wants because it stops Christians from warning people now and giving them the knowledge, they will need to recognise the fulfilment of prophecy at the beginning of the Tribulation. These people will then accept Jesus as their Lord and become the Tribulation saints referred to in the book of Revelation.

10 Practically

- You are commissioned to be a watchman, to understand End Times prophecy and to pray for the Lord's return.
- Israel is the focus of End Times prophecy; you should spend time praying for the Lord's protection of the nation.
- Use your knowledge of End Times events as a tool for evangelising others.
- Be aware of the false doctrine of Replacement Theology in 'Christian' teachings and be able to assist other Christians in understanding the error of the doctrine.

11 Proclamation

'I declare as a disciple of the Lord Jesus, that I am called to watch and pray for His return. I will make the effort to have a sound knowledge of Bible prophecy, which will strengthen my relationship with my Lord Jesus. I commit to stand on His promises and hold the hope of His return in my heart.'

12 Prayer

'Thank you, Lord Jesus for the wonderful plan of salvation that You have for mankind. That as the Son of David, you are working to establish your Kingdom, and that one day You will take Your rightful place and be seated on the throne of David in the city of the Great King. I praise You Lord, that I will be a witness to this event and be able a part of Your great triumph. I, therefore, pray that You will guide me as Your watchman to fulfil the duties You have for me. Help me to play my small part in the events that will result in Your being crowned King of Kings.'