

# Understanding Prophecy, Part I

## Introduction Lecture

### How God Structured His Word to His People

Welcome to this study UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY, PART I. In this introduction to Part I of this series, we will seek to understand HOW GOD GAVE HIS WORD, so that we might gain correct understanding of it.

But before we get to that, let's consider for a moment WHY we might even desire to study Prophecy.

- What is PROPHECY anyway?
- What would it mean that we are going to STUDY PROPHECY?
- Would that mean that we are going to go to very SPECIFIC passages which specifically deal with *future things* such as what one might find in the books of the Prophets?

One thing we will strive to do is to act in accord with what the Apostle Paul says:

I Corinthians 2

...5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

And in this same letter he admonishes the Church at Corinth with some words that we will desire to be careful with as well:

I Corinthians 3

1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3 for you are still fleshly.

And watch why he tells them that they are acting like they are still babes in Christ, even like they are still fleshly...

For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

And he goes on to reveal the cause of the jealousy and strife among them, why they are still acting carnally (fleshly), walking like mere men...

4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? 5 What then is Apollos? And what is Paul?

Also we want to recognize a warning from Peter concerning prophecy, and it is interesting that his focus is on the Church "in the last days":

## II Peter 3

**1 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?”**

Know what “FIRST OF ALL”? That in the LAST day, mockers will come with their mocking...mocking things that have to do with the promise of His coming! Do you see that?

Let’s stop there for just a moment. Peter, in this second letter that he writes, is dealing with the **coming kingdom of Jesus Christ**. He is dealing with “the promise of Christ’s coming, and some of the things attendant to that.

Peter is dealing with PROPHECY. In fact, let’s back up for a moment and see what he says in the first part of this epistle:

## II Peter 1

**16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.**

Remember Peter was one of the three disciples chosen by Jesus to witness a prophetic appearance of Him in His Kingdom Glory. Remember the transfiguration on the Mount?

He describes it for us:

**17 For when He Jesus received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”-- 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. 20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

Not one man’s interpretation! (Explain)

Now let’s go back to what Peter wants us to “know first of all”....

## II Peter 3

**3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming?”**

Notice this is in a mocking sort of way.

We can see a similar situation in Moses' day, can't we? Moses was a prophet sent by God to redeem God's people out of bondage. After they are redeemed, they are brought to a mountain, wherein God will teach and instruct them as to why they have been redeemed, and what His purposes are for them. And while at that mount, Moses takes his leave for a time, instructing them to wait for them until he comes back.

#### **Exodus 24**

**12 Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction." 13 So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. 14 But to the elders he said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them." 15 Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain.**

And so he goes into the cloud, to the top of the mountain. And so what happens?

God is dealing with Moses on the mountain. And Ex. 25 is all about gold...how to build the ark of the covenant. The mercy seat. Aaron's rod. In fact, Moses is getting instructions of **how to prepare a place** on earth, wherein God will dwell with His people and abide in their midst!

Gold is mentioned quite a few times, as God is giving specific instructions to Moses as to **how to prepare a place** for God to dwell with His people.

And all the while Moses is receiving instructions as to how to prepare a place wherein God will dwell with His people, His people are below the mountain, **molding** a god of gold, that they began to worship (in Moses absence) saying "this is the god (the elohim) that took us out of Egypt!

And that god of gold was constructed at the hands of the very ones whom Moses left in charge of God's people while he was to be gone...until he would return—the leaders of God's people.

Paul makes reference to very thing when he tells the Church at Corinth

#### **I Corinthians 10**

**1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.**

Yes, that first generation all died in the wilderness, save two! Their bodies were strewn in the wilderness over the following 38 years. They could not go into the land, the land to which God was leading those whom He redeemed out of bondage, because of their disobedient and stubborn heart. They lost their inheritance in the land. And look what Paul says to the Church concerning this:

**6 Now these things happened as examples [Lit. types] for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. 7 And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY."**

During the time...

This was the very thing to which Paul makes reference to. Peter warns the Church of this very thing with respect to the time that Jesus, the One who redeemed us out of bondage, and subsequent to that, He is seen have entered into a cloud, in order to be taken to a high mountain, wherein He is preparing a place for us so that He can dwell with us!

Isn't it true?

Within a context of dealing with the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ (future things. i.e. prophecy) Peter says:

## **II Peter 2**

**1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false [lit. molded] words...**

(Teach)

Thus, Peter says

## **II Peter 3**

**1 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."**

From the beginning of creation... related to the Promise of His coming...

Peter goes on to say what they mean by this..."For when they maintain this..."

Can we know??

Peter says:

## **II Peter 3**

**8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise...**

**Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets.**

Then Peter gives us this encouragement:

## **II Peter 3**

**17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.**

So with all of this, how are we supposed to *know* HOW TO STUDY PROPHECY?

First we can do as the Proverb says:

### **Proverbs 3**

**5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;**

Whose understanding are we supposed to lean on? If not our own, than whose? Another man's? NO!

### **I Corinthians 2**

**5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God. 6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." 10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.**

And even in looking at God's Word, we need to heed Peter's warning in realizing that "prophecy is not up to any one man's interpretation, but men (plural), moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke GOD'S WORD TO US!

(Speak about interpretation...vs. knowledge and understanding)

So we are not going to go to any one man...in our study of Prophecy. We will not go contemporary writers, who may be right or they may be wrong. We will also not go just to ONE of the human authors through whom God breathed His words into. But rather we will do as the Prophet Isaiah says, as he explains *how God gives knowledge and understanding*:

### **Isaiah 28**

**9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little...**

So we will strive to study in such a way that we may not be as Paul called those in Corinth, as ones who were not able to partake of the meat, but of milk only, still be fleshly, walking like mere men, who were still babes in Christ...

OK? Are you ready?

The definition I found of the Greek word for PROPHECY is this:

PROPHECY: to show or make known one's thoughts, with the idea of allowing the thoughts of one to shine forth prior to those thoughts coming to pass.

Well, whose thoughts would be made known, whose thoughts would shine forth in the Word of God?

Of course it would be the Words of God that we would want to study! What would we find there?

We can know that

**John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God.**

**...14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.**

Jesus is the Word that was made flesh. He is the WORD of God who came to dwell among men.

In fact, in the Book of the Revelation, which is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, it says:

**Revelation 19**

**13b ... and his name is called The Word of God.**

And if we were to hear the testimony of this JESUS, what would His testimony be?

**Revelation 19**

**10b ...for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**

The testimony of Jesus is the BREATH of prophecy.

GOD BREATHED His word into certain chosen men, through whom He would give His testimony about His SON, which is prophecy.

So... to study prophecy is to study JESUS, and to study Jesus is to study the WORD, because He is the WORD of God.

And if we are going to study the Word of God, we need to study it according to *the way God gave it*. And we could go to no one better than to Jesus Himself to find out how to study the Word (which is in itself fully PROPHECY)

We of course remember what took place on Resurrection Day, when two disciples were on the road to Emmaus. Without going into the details of all of this (as we have done so often before) we will jump to see how Jesus rebuked these two for not knowing something that they should have known. And in this rebuke, He revealed to them, how they **could have known** what they **should have known**. They should have known and understood that Jesus was going to have to suffer before entering Glory.

Here is the rebuke:

**Lu 24:25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"**

Here is what they could have/should have known and understood:

**26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"**

And here is how He taught them to know and understand:

**...27 And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.**

And having done that — explained to them about Himself in ALL OF SCRIPTURE, here is the result:

**31 And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.**

And here is their own testimony of the result of understanding how they were to understand Scripture:

**32 And they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”**

And they immediately arose and made their way back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples about their experience.

**35 And they began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. 36 And while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst.**

And He essentially said the same thing to the larger group of disciples.

**44 Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...**

God has structured His Word specifically...

**Ps 12:6 And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.**

God’s Word is perfect. It is without fault. It is pure. Having been purified seven times!

Why did Jesus “begin with Moses”?

It is because within the writings of Moses, we find the very foundation of the remainder of the Scripture. God begins in the Book of Genesis with purpose! The very foundations upon which the remainder of Scripture is to be built is found in the first book of the Bible. And wouldn’t that make sense?

**Psalms 11**

**3 If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?”**

So in this study, we will strive to lay the foundation according to the way it is given in Scripture, at the beginning. And this is laid out in your homework as you study from week to week.

Next week, we will look in depth at this time line which is behind me. Three things I want to put up today would fall into a very broad stroke...

We would first have to know and understand the difference between time and eternity. In the most basic way to lay out this time, we can see that there are:

AGES PAST                      TIME                      AGES FUTURE

And with that, we will begin to see how God began to reveal what He wants us to know in the way of a FOUNDATION. He lays it out in the first chapter of Genesis, the first of Moses' writings.

**Ge 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

Notice the order here — in creation, God deals with the heavens first.

We can even see this in a NT passage:

**Col 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him.**

Even in the creation of the new heavens and earth, look how God stated it through the pen of Peter:

**II Pe 3:11 Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13 But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.**

But in the passage in the Book of Colossians, we can see that in the restoration of things, God deals with the earth first:

**Col 1:19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.**

Which brings us back to the beginning. God deals with the heavens first in the creation of all things, but He deals with the earth first in the restoration.

**Gen. 1: 2 And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 3 Then God said...**

Old Testament deals with

- the restoration of the earth, with the earthly realm of the kingdom in view, and
- God's people, Israel

And the New Testament deals with

- the restoration of the heavens with the heavenly realm of the kingdom in view,  
and
- God's people, the Body of Christ

And in all of this, we will seek to study God's Word, in specific — PROPHECY— by studying it the way in which God gave it!