

SPECIAL PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

PROPHECY

Prophecy is one of the most important subjects of the Bible. There is much disagreement about this subject, leading some to ignore it altogether. A significantly large segment of the Bible has to do with prophecy. It is a great mistake to ignore prophecy because of disagreements or extremes. If anyone will apply the principles covered so far, there should be no problem in approaching the subject of prophecy. A prophet is a person who speaks for God to men. He gives God's message, and he is to bring forth the Word in the proper spirit. "He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men" (I Corinthians 14:3). In the Bible a prophet usually spoke to people concerning the present. This is called forth telling. He may or may not speak about the future which is called foretelling. In this study we will concern ourselves with prophecy that speaks concerning the future. Remember, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy" (Revelation 19:10).

KINDS OF PROPHECY IN THE BIBLE

1. Immediate predictions. These are fulfilled within a short period of time after they are given (Exodus 14:4, 13-17; Jeremiah 38:18).
2. Old Testament predictions fulfilled in the Old Testament (Joshua 6:26; I Kings 6:34)
3. Old Testament predictions fulfilled in the New Testament. Prophecies concerning Jesus' first coming are in this category.
4. New Testament prophecies in the New Testament (Matthew 16:21; Matthew 27).
5. Unfulfilled Old Testament and New Testament prophecies. These relate to end time events and are connected with the second coming of Jesus

If we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, that the immediate predictions of the past were fulfilled, that certain prophecies in the Old Testament and New Testament have been fulfilled already, why would we not want to study the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled? Many of the prophecies concerning Jesus will not be fulfilled until after the church age. If the Jewish people had understood the prophecies concerning the first coming of Jesus, they would have recognized Him as the Messiah. Without studying unfulfilled prophecies there is no way to understand the future, let alone prepare for it. The generation before the flood ignored the warnings of Enoch and were destroyed. "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37). The Apostle Peter said, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night," and we should be "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (I Peter 3:10, 12). Approximately 27% of the Bible is predictive prophecy. Only about half of them have been fulfilled. We can't consider ourselves serious Bible students and ignore the subject of prophecy. And if we are to study prophecy, we must know and apply the hermeneutical principles for interpreting these portions of Scripture. They are as important, if not more important, than other subjects of the Bible, considering we are living in the last days (Hebrews 1:2; Acts 2:17; II Timothy 3:1-5; II Peter 3:3-4).