

Framing The Picture of Prophecy

When studying any complex Biblical subject one of the most important principles of accurate Biblical interpretation is to first identify the solid foundational concepts that can be clearly and easily proven from scripture and utilize these concepts as a guide for interpreting the more difficult scriptures that are not as easily nailed down. This principle can be expressed in the analogy of a jigsaw puzzle. When putting together a jigsaw puzzle the first thing one should do is identify the border pieces and build the frame of the puzzle. After the frame is constructed, the picture begins to take shape because it is then clear that all of the remaining pieces must fit somewhere inside this frame as it is simply not a possibility that any of the remaining pieces could fit outside the frame.

Creating an accurate picture of Biblical prophecy can be a challenging undertaking as prophecy is a subject that can be very complex, and its very nature requires interpreting scriptures that are often vague and can be interpreted in more than one way. So, prophecy is definitely a subject where it is very important that we rely on the straight forward foundational concepts of the Bible as a guide for interpreting scriptures that are vague and not as clear. In other words, before we can develop an accurate picture of prophecy, we must first make sure that we have correctly constructed the frame of our picture of prophecy using the easily proven foundational concepts of the Bible as the border pieces.

One of the fundamental concepts we should use as a border piece to frame the picture of prophecy is the Bible's stated requirements for salvation. The New Testament dogmatically and repeatedly tells us that the path to salvation is a narrow and difficult path (Matt 7:13-14) that requires enduring through suffering and being persecuted (2 Tim 3:12; Rom 8:16-17). It even explains that facing this suffering and persecution is how God's character is developed in us (James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-4). However, most prophetic theories taught in the Church of God today actually contain two distinctly different paths to salvation. These theories teach that the difficult path that requires enduring through suffering and being persecuted only applies to the Firstfruits as they are the only ones that have to overcome Satan in their day of salvation. Whereas the vast majority of mankind has a much easier route to salvation because they receive their opportunity to obtain salvation in a utopian setting where they do not have to face Satan in their day of salvation. Satan is our persecutor and the orchestrator of our fiery trials (Eph 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8, Job 1:6-2:7). So, if the majority of mankind does not have to face Satan in their day of salvation, then they have a path to salvation that doesn't require being persecuted and facing fiery trials.

So, before we can develop a picture of prophecy that includes these two distinctly different paths to salvation, we must first ask the question "Do the foundational scriptures of the Bible even allow for the possibility of an easy path to salvation that doesn't require facing fiery trials and being persecuted? And, if the Bible does allow for this then how exactly will God's character be developed in the people who obtain

salvation through this path?” If in fact the Bible only allows for one path to salvation that requires facing fiery trials and suffering persecution, then we have to frame our picture of prophecy with this foundational concept and we have to place all of the other pieces of the puzzle inside this border. With this foundation in mind let’s take a look at what the Bible tells us is required for salvation and how God’s character is developed in us.

Is Suffering Required For Salvation?

Jesus Christ directly stated in the sermon on the mount that the path to salvation is a difficult path and that as a result of the difficult nature of this path there are “few who find it”.

Matt 7:13-14

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ **Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

Notice that Christ says this applies to “THE way that leads to life”. He does not say this is just one of several ways that lead to life. Rather He says this is THE way that leads to life and the difficulty of this path is severe enough that it causes a significant attrition rate among those who pursue it. Christ emphasized this same point numerous times throughout His ministry on earth even directly stating several times that “many are called but few chosen” (Matt 20:16; Matt 22:14). So, when Christ stated in Matt 7:14 that “there are few who find it” He wasn’t referring to the fact that only a small percentage of mankind would be called as Firstfruits. He was saying that due to the difficulty of the path that leads to salvation there will be a significantly smaller number of people who successfully obtain salvation as compared to the number of people who instead choose to pursue the path that leads to destruction.

The reason for this is the path that leads to salvation requires that we successfully endure through being persecuted.

2 Tim 3:12

¹² Yes, and **all** who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus **will suffer persecution.**

If we pay attention to Paul’s wording in this scripture, it is very clear he is making a dogmatic all inclusive statement. He says this applies to “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus”. Christ is the only name by which we can be saved (Acts 4:8-12). There is no such thing as obtaining salvation through any route other than accepting Christ as our Savior and as the One who reconciles us to God the Father (1 Tim 2:5-7; Heb 8:6;

Heb 9:15). Paul says that his statement about suffering persecution applies to ALL that desire to pursue salvation through Christ. So, he is clearly saying that everyone that pursues salvation through Jesus Christ is going to suffer persecution. He also makes it clear that this persecution will take place during their day of salvation as this would obviously be the only time that they would “desire to live godly in Christ Jesus”. This statement would never apply to a person prior to being called as at that point in their life they are not even trying to “live godly in Christ Jesus”. So, we can see that Paul is making a dogmatic all inclusive statement that everyone that will ever obtain salvation will have to suffer through persecution during their day of salvation to be able to obtain salvation.

Paul also directly tells us that suffering through persecution is a requirement for us to obtain salvation.

Rom 8:16-17

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,
¹⁷ and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.**

Here Paul tells us that to be glorified together with Christ (i.e. to receive salvation) we are required to “suffer with Him” and the Apostle Peter gives us a very clear definition of exactly what this means.

1 Peter 2:19-24

¹⁹ For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? **But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.** ²¹ **For to this you were called,** because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that **you should follow His steps:** ²² "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.

Notice that Peter clearly defines suffering as Christ suffered as taking it patiently when we suffer in spite of the fact that we have been righteous and the suffering we are experiencing is in no way a result of the consequences of our own actions. This is clearly the only way that Christ could have suffered because He never sinned and thus would never have been subject to receiving the negative consequences of His own sins.

This type of suffering is the very definition of persecution. If a person simply receives the negative consequences of their own sins and bad decisions that is not being persecuted. Persecution is when a person is being specifically targeted for negative treatment that they do not deserve to be the recipient of.

Notice in verse 21 Peter states, "For to this you were called". He is directly stating that suffering as Christ suffered (i.e. being persecuted) is a fundamental component of the calling to salvation. This is not some additional component that some people called to salvation have to face but the vast majority of others are able to skip. It is a fundamental component of the calling to salvation for everyone who will ever receive this calling. This principle is repeated all throughout the New Testament clearly illustrating that it is a fundamental component of the path to salvation and not something that only a tiny portion of those called to salvation have to face.

Phil 1:29-30

²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, **but also to suffer for His sake**, ³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

1 Peter 5:10

¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, **after you have suffered a while**, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

2 Cor 1:5-7

⁵ **For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us**, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. ⁶ Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. ⁷ And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as **you are partakers of the sufferings**, so also you will partake of the consolation.

Acts 14:21-22

²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, **"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."**

2 Thess 1:3-8

³ We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ⁴ so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith **in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure**, ⁵ which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, **that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer**; ⁶ since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Tim 2:3

³ You therefore **must endure hardship** as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Tim 1:8-12

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, **but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God**, ⁹ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, ¹⁰ but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. ¹² **For this reason I also suffer these things**; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

Christians Should Expect To Suffer Through Fiery Trials

Peter makes it very clear in his epistle that facing fiery trials and persecution is something every Christian should expect to be a normal part of the path to salvation and not something unusual that they have been personally singled out to receive.

1 Peter 4:12-13

¹² Beloved, **do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you**; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Given the fact that Peter tells us that facing fiery trials is a normal expectation for all Christians, it is no surprise that significant portions of the Bible are dedicated to addressing the subject of facing fiery trials and giving Christians advice about how to successfully endure through them. Throughout the New Testament the Apostles repeatedly give us examples of suffering through hard trials and advice about how to successfully cope with them.

Acts 5:40-42

⁴⁰ And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.** ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 9:15-16

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ **For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.**"

Rom 8:18

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

2 Cor 12:9-10

⁹ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore **I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.** For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Phil 4:10-13

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, **both to abound and to suffer need.** ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The Apostle James even tells us to look to the example of the prophets and specifically to the example of Job in dealing with our own trials.

James 5:10-11

¹⁰ My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, **as an example of suffering and patience**. ¹¹ Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

The entire book of Job is dedicated to addressing the subject of enduring through persecution. The book makes a very big point of the fact that Job's trials were brought upon him in spite of the fact that he was a righteous man that faithfully obeyed God (Job 1:1; 1:6; 2:3; 2:10). Clearly, Job was being persecuted and James is telling us to look to the example of Job and how God used Job's trials for his ultimate good as an example to help us in coping with our own trials. The very fact that the Bible dedicates so much time to addressing the subject of dealing with suffering and persecution illustrates how fundamental this subject is to the Christian life and the path that leads to salvation.

Satan's Role In Our Trials

The story of Job illustrates a very important lesson for us about the role Satan plays in orchestrating our suffering and persecution. The first two chapters of the book give us a behind the scenes look at how Job's trials played out. God was clearly in charge the entire time, but He utilized Satan as a tool to carry out the trials and persecution that was brought upon Job and repeatedly set the parameters on exactly how far Satan was allowed to go in persecuting Job (Job 1:12; 2:6). Later in the book God directly states that He utilizes Satan as His servant to carry out His will for mankind.

Job 41:1-4

¹ "Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook, Or snare his tongue with a line which you lower? ² Can you put a reed through his nose, Or pierce his jaw with a hook? ³ Will he make many supplications to you? Will he speak softly to you? ⁴ Will he make a covenant with you? **Will you take him as a servant forever?**

We typically don't think of Satan as a servant of God as the Bible makes it very clear that Satan is the enemy of God and God's people and that his efforts are always focused on trying to undermine God's plan and attack God's people.

1 Peter 5:8-10

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.** ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. ¹⁰ But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, **after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.**

Eph 6:11-13

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.** ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

The reason the Bible says that God has taken Satan as His servant is because He utilizes Satan's efforts to attack God's people as a tool to test us and to develop us through the fiery trials that Satan brings upon us in his attempts to try to destroy us. Notice that right after Peter tells us that Satan is our adversary looking for opportunities to devour us, he then tells us that God will perfect us "after you have suffered a while". This is because it is only *after* we have successfully endured through Satan's persecution that that we are able to receive salvation.

James 1:12

¹² Blessed **is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved,** he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

This is because God uses the fiery trials and persecutions that Satan causes in our lives as tools to test us and to develop His character in us.

James 1:2-4

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that **the testing of your faith produces patience.** ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Rom 5:3-4

³ And not only that, but **we also glory in tribulations**, knowing that **tribulation produces perseverance**; ⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

1 Peter 1:6-9

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, **you have been grieved by various trials**, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, **though it is tested by fire**, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.

This is why the New Testament repeatedly refers to fiery trials as blessings.

Matt 5:10-12

¹⁰ **Blessed are those who are persecuted** for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "**Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you**, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 6:22-23

²² **Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil**, For the Son of Man's sake. ²³ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.

1 Peter 3:13-17

¹³ And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴ **But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed**. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." ¹⁵ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

It is hard for us as carnal, physical humans to view trials and persecutions as a blessing. This is because our definition of a blessing is something that removes pain and discomfort from our lives and gives us pleasure and enjoyment. We typically do not view things that cause us pain as blessings. However, we often view this subject by asking the wrong question. Our definition of a blessing often focuses on the question "Does it feel good?" whereas God's definition of a blessing focuses on the question "Does it do good?". What feels good to us often doesn't do good and the things that do good often don't feel good. Suffering through fiery trials and persecution doesn't feel good but it can certainly do a lot of good if we use the opportunity to allow God to develop His character in us.

Testing Our Character Is Very Important To God

When considering the significance of Satan's role in orchestrating our fiery trials and persecution and how God utilizes Satan's attacks on His people as a tool to test us and develop His character in us, we also need to consider how fundamentally important it is to God that He is able to test our hearts to determine if we are truly committed to obeying Him. The Bible repeatedly tells us how important testing our hearts is to God and how He uses fiery trials to accomplish this fundamentally important purpose.

Isa 48:10-11

¹⁰ **Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.** ¹¹ For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another.

Ps 66:10-12

¹⁰ **For You, O God, have tested us;** You have refined us as silver is refined.
¹¹ You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs. ¹² You have caused men to ride over our heads; **We went through fire and through water; But You brought us out to rich fulfillment.**

Prov 17:3

³ The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, **But the LORD tests the hearts.**

Jer 17:9-10

⁹ "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? ¹⁰ **I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind,** Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

1 Thess 2:4

⁴ But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, **but God who tests our hearts.**

Jer 20:12

¹² But, O LORD of hosts, **You who test the righteous, And see the mind and heart,** Let me see Your vengeance on them; For I have pleaded my cause before You.

Ps 11:4-5

⁴ The LORD is in His holy temple, The LORD's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, **His eyelids test the sons of men.** ⁵ **The LORD tests the righteous,** But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.

Ps 7:9

⁹ Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, But establish the just; **For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.**

Jer 11:20

²⁰ But, O LORD of hosts, You who judge righteously, **Testing the mind and the heart,** Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You I have revealed my cause.

Deu 13:1-3

¹ "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' — which you have not known — 'and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for **the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.**

The scriptures quoted above are just a portion of the numerous scriptures that demonstrate how fundamentally important it is to God to test and our hearts not only as a tool to develop our character but also as a tool to determine if we are truly committed to obeying Him. A great example of this can be found in the trial that God used to test Abraham in Genesis 22.

Gen 22:1-2

1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

God was clearly giving Abraham the ultimate test to see if he was willing to put God first above everything else in his life by being willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. The comment that the Angel of the LORD makes to Abraham when He stops Abraham from actually following through with sacrificing Isaac teaches us a very important lesson about the trials we face as Christians.

Gen 22:11-12

¹¹ But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." ¹² And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; **for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.**"

The Angel of the LORD comments to Abraham "now I know that you fear God". In other words, this trial wasn't just a tool to develop Abraham's character it was also a test to see what Abraham would do when he was put under extreme pressure and obeying God became personally very painful for him. How we behave when we are faced with this type of painful situation is the true test of our character and our commitment to God. If our lives are always comfortable and we are never placed in situations where choosing to obey God causes us significant pain, then our character and or commitment to God is never truly tested. To truly test our hearts and refine our character requires that we face painful and difficult situations. In other words, truly testing our hearts and our commitment to God requires that we successfully endure through fiery trials and persecution.

A More Accurate Picture of Prophecy

As this paper has demonstrated, successfully enduring through fiery trials and persecution is a clearly stated requirement for salvation. The Bible spends a great deal of time addressing this topic. The reason this is a requirement for salvation is because it is the primary tool that God uses to test our commitment to Him and to develop His character in us. Satan is the orchestrator of our fiery trials and the perpetrator of our persecution. This is why the Bible refers to him as God's servant even though he is also clearly identified as the enemy of God and God's people. Given this fact, we can see that overcoming Satan's temptations and enduring through the trials and tests that

he orchestrates is simply a fundamental requirement that everyone must face to obtain salvation. This is the reason that Satan is released and allowed to directly work to deceive mankind again after the millennium (Rev 20:7-10). This is also why the book of Revelation tells us that Satan MUST be released again after the millennium.

Rev. 20:1-3

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. **But after these things he must be released for a little while.**

The Bible's description of the millennium is a picture of a wonderful utopian environment. The prophecies of the millennium tell us that this will be a time when there is no more war (Is 2:1-4; Mic 4:1-3). These prophecies also tell us that the millennium will be a time when everyone is healthy (Is 35:5-6) and there will be abundant resources so that no one has to suffer due to lack of basic necessities (Is 25:6; Amos 9:13-15). However, the Bible also tells us that all of these things radically change after Satan is released.

Rev. 20:7-9

⁷ Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ **and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.** ⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

The verses above directly tell us that after Satan is released, he influences a significant portion of mankind to go to war. This battle is described in much more detail in Ezekiel 38 & 39. These chapters tell us that this war is no small event. After God intervenes and destroys those that instigate this battle, it will take over 7 months to locate and bury all the bodies of those that are killed (Ezek 39:11-16) and the weapons collected from this battle will be used for firewood for the next 7 years (Ezek 39:9-10).

In addition, if we pay close attention to the criteria that Christ uses to judge the salvation of all those called to salvation after His return to earth, we can clearly see that the abundant resources and universal good health that will exist during the millennium will also change after Satan is released as well.

Matt. 25:31-46

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for **I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.**’ ³⁷ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? ³⁸ When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? ³⁹ Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ ⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: ⁴² for **I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;** ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴ “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

For Christ to judge the salvation of all those who are called after His return to the earth based on whether or not they were willing to help others that were dealing with significant health problems (i.e. “the sick”) and whether or not they assisted those that were dealing with the lack of basic necessities (i.e. “the hungry” and “the naked”), these circumstances will have to occur on a wide scale during the time that their salvation is being judged. This fact clearly tells us that Satan’s release will result in him being able to change the environment on the earth from the perfect utopian environment that will exist during the millennium to an environment more similar to our world today. The reason for this is because these circumstances have to exist for all of those called after Christ’s return to experience the persecution and fiery trials that are fundamental for mankind to successfully endure through to obtain salvation.

If we exercise the principal of framing our picture of prophecy with the foundational scriptures that layout how God tests our commitment to Him and develops His character in us, we can see that there is simply no such thing as an easy path to salvation that does not require having to face Satan’s temptations and persecution.

Overcoming Satan's temptations is simply a requirement for obtaining salvation and if we utilize this basic principle to frame our picture of prophecy then we will come to a picture of prophecy that is consistent with the foundational principles of the Bible.