

Gail Allwine
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My title today is:

Why Prophecy?

Frankly, I'm worried about prophecy and I will tell you why a little later. There are different categories or types of prophecies. Some were given a long time ago and also were fulfilled a long time ago. An example is Micah 5:2, we can look at that in Matthew. It is quoted there in Matthew 2:1-6.

Matthew 2:1 *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2) saying, Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” 3) When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5) So, they said to him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6) But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel. (NKJV)*

They were quoting Micah 5:2. So the Magi came there and asked about Christ. The chief priests and the scribes knew the prophecy, so they sent the Magi on to Bethlehem. There are many prophecies about Christ's coming, what He suffered and His death. Many were fulfilled back during the time that He was on the earth. Probably very few, if any, were really understood until after the fact; after they were fulfilled and after He died. But there were many, many prophecies about Christ that were fulfilled back in those days.

Then there are prophecies which deal with a longtime duration, clear to the end time and the establishment of God's Kingdom. These began a long time ago and are still in progress at this time. The book of Daniel is an amazing book. Things that were revealed to Daniel are really quite amazing. I would like to look at two prophecies from the book of Daniel. You have all heard about Nebuchadnezzar's dream which was interpreted for the king by Daniel. It's in Daniel 2:36 and I would like to look at that.

Daniel 2:36 This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. 37) You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;

38) *and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold.*

39) *But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.*

40) *And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.*

41) *Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay.*

42) *And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.*

43) *As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay.*

44) *And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.*
(NKJV)

History has confirmed these four kingdoms; Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar was the first, then the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great and finally the Roman Empire. As gold is to silver, as to bronze is to iron, they are progressively lesser in quality and greater in strength. These four kingdoms are also depicted in parallel in Daniel 7 as a lion, a bear, a leopard and a fourth being a beast, dreadful and terrible. So, this gives some additional characteristics of these four kingdoms.

Daniel asked about the fourth kingdom and what he was told is in Daniel 7:23.

Daniel 7:23 *Thus he said: The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces.*

24) *The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings.*

25) *He shall speak pompous words against the Most-High, shall persecute the saints of the Most- High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.*

26) *But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever.*

27) *Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most-High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.*
(NKJV)

We see the Roman Empire depicted in Daniel 2 as having ten toes and in Daniel 7 as having the ten horns. So, this is a prophecy that we are in the middle of. As you look back, history shows us how a large part of this prophecy was already fulfilled. The first three kingdoms have been established and the fourth is continuing right now. The characteristics were depicted very perfectly in prophecy and have been shown in history. However, the prophecy of this fourth kingdom is still in progress. It ends with the return of Jesus Christ.

Next, I would like to look at the prophecy in Daniel 9—the seventy weeks prophecy. Starting in verse 24.

Daniel 9:24 *Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.*

25) *Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; [That's sixty-nine weeks all together] The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. (NKJV)*

Now look at Ezra 7:12. This is quite commonly considered to be the prophecy that was spoken of by Daniel.

Ezra 7:12 *Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven: Perfect peace, and so forth.*

13) *I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with you. (NKJV)*

Continuing in verse 16....

16) *and whereas all the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon, along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests, are to be freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem—*

17) *now therefore, be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of the house of your God in Jerusalem.*

18) *And whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God.*

19) *Also, the articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem.*

20) *And whatever more may be needed for the house of your God, which you may have occasion to provide, pay for it from the king's treasury. (NKJV)*

If we consider this as the prophecy going forth to rebuild the Temple, from that time to the beginning of Christ's work on earth, His ministry and If you think of a day for a year,

sixty-nine weeks, then sixty-nine times seven is 483 years. That decree in Ezra to the time of Christ's ministry was exactly 483 years.

So here are two prophecies that have gaps—gaps that we are in the middle of. Both of these prophecies have led to many, many interpretations of end time events. In my early years in the church, which would be back in the middle '60's we had what I would call "itching ears" for prophecy. I have to include myself in that. We couldn't wait to hear some new thing about prophecy. At one of my early Feasts in the church in Squaw Valley back in the '60's, we had morning and afternoon services. During one morning service it was stated that in the afternoon service there would be some new proclamation about prophecy. Of course, when the afternoon service was about to begin, as we were sitting on the edge of our seats waiting for what was coming. The announcement came, "Jesus Christ is coming again". Well what a letdown; how could the prophecy that Jesus Christ is coming again be a letdown? It didn't satisfy our "itching ears".

Back then we thought we had it all figured out. There would be a huge ten nation force in Germany represented by these ten kings and the ten toes. We would be taken to a place of safety for three and a half years during this Tribulation. We would be leaving in 1972 to escape the Tribulation until Christ returned.

It was always quite a special treat when Gerald Waterhouse, who we called the traveling Evangelist, would come to visit our church. He would take up the whole Sabbath service and then some, quite often to lay out prophecy in intricate detail. He would even tell who was going to do what in God's Kingdom—he had it all defined very perfectly. So how many times have we been burned by prophecy? I would say many, many times. How many times has anyone been burned by prophecy? I think there is a lesson in that in 2 Peter 1:20

2 Peter 1:20 ... *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,
21) for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* (NKJV)

This is a scripture that really needs to be taken seriously. I said I worry about prophecy and I do. I worry about prophecy because it can lead us astray. It can capture our minds. I really could have let that happen to me. It can get our minds off of what is really important, which is developing the character that God is looking for in His children. He wants humble, loving children for His coming Kingdom. I believe that we need to take a hard look at prophecy; it's past, present and future purpose or purposes? I have several points.

1. Prophecy shows that God has all Power and is in complete control.

Isaiah 46:9 *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,*

*10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,
11) Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed, I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it. (NKJV)*

This demonstrates—and I think just as the prophecies in Daniel have demonstrated, God’s ultimate Power and ability to really do anything that He wants to. He has created this Universe; He has created this earth and has created us and He is in complete control. So, these prophecies that are still ongoing will be fulfilled. But I don’t think they will be fulfilled in the way in which we expect. I think often, that we probably won’t see them fulfilled until we can look back and say, “Wow”. God fulfilled that prophecy exactly how He stated, but not at all in the way I expected. What an awesome God!

The second point:

2. God’s Word is absolute and we can depend upon it totally.

Hebrews 6:17 *Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,
18) that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.
19) This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil ... (NKJV)*

God’s Word is absolute. The prophecies show that for sure and we can depend upon it.

The third point:

3. God does things His way.

Isaiah 55:8 *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.
9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. (NKJV)*

“God works in mysterious ways, His miracles to perform”. If Israel had known anything about geography back when they left Egypt, they certainly would not have followed the path that God led them through to the Red Sea where there was no place to cross. It looked like a dead end. But God led them there to show them His Power. God works in mysterious ways.

The fourth point:

4. God gives us what we need and what He feels we need to know at a time we need to know it.

God has shown this so many times already. He has shown us His whole plan of creation. He has shown us why we are here. He has given us an outline of all the events to the end time. He has left us a lot of details to wonder about, but we have the outline. Christ told us that there was this wonderful 1000-year millennium of peace and joy coming, and we can look forward to that. I would like to look at Daniel once again—Daniel 12:8.

Daniel 12:8 *Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, My lord, what shall be the end of these things?"*

9) And he said, Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (NKJV)

So, there are prophecies that have been sealed and are still sealed. So when will they be revealed? I think they will be revealed after the fact and we can look back and say

“What an awesome God, the way He worked these things out”.

I do feel that God will reveal things to us as we need to know them; as we need things to carry on in this life. So, the knowledge of the future belongs to God. God tells us some things—He actually tells us a lot of things. The promise of His Kingdom, the promise of eternal life, but He purposely sets limits. He leaves some things vague and I think that is quite a test. What are we going to do about this? Are we going to argue about it, are we going to figure it out on our own or are we just going to go our way and try to become what God wants us to be?

There's a book entitled, David by Charles Swindoll in which he posed an interesting question:

When was the last time you thanked God for not showing you the future?

The context of the book was David's life and God not revealing what was coming in his life, which would have just been discouraging for David. It does seem to me that trying to predict the future is a waste of time. It can get our minds off more important things, like trusting in God and trying to live a Godly life, doing what God would have us do.

Think of the things we don't have to worry about because we don't know what is coming. Just leaving it up to God forces us to look to God and just trust in Him. Not knowing the future will force us to live a day at a time. Christ did teach us this when He gave us “this day our daily bread” and He promises, that if we have faith, we will have our daily bread. We won't have our wants always but we will have “our daily bread”.

When Daniel pressed God for more information, God said for him to just go his way, as that was enough for now. Deuteronomy 29:29.

Deuteronomy 29:29 *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (NKJV)*

God reveals things to us so that we can obey Him. Here are a few scriptures we can add to this.

Acts 1:6 *Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

7) *And He said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. (NKJV)*

So, God has left things in His Authority. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2

1 Thessalonians 5:1 *But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.*

2) *For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. (NKJV)*

Again, it's left up to God. Finally, Matthew 24:36.

Matthew 24:36 *But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.*

37) *But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

38) *For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,*

39) *and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

40) *Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.*

41) *Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.*

42) *Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.*

43) *But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.*

44) *Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (NKJV)*

The Apostle Paul had an affliction—some physical problem—and he asked God three times to remove it. I believe God is saying something similar to us—similar to what He said to the Apostle Paul.

“I’ve given you My Holy Spirit, I’ve given you My Word, I’ve given you a job to do, just go your way, be about whatever I’ve given you to do.”