

# **HAVNER'S REFLECTIONS ON PROPHECY**

compiled by Michael Catt

*Havner's Reflections on Prophecy*  
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## **Introduction**

No one has impacted my life more than Vance Havner. Dr. Havner was one of the last prophetic voices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although small of stature, he was a giant among men. His words always packed a punch.

Vance Havner was compared with Jeremiah, infused with a holy fire and compelled to call people to repentance and lordship. A preacher at age twelve, he traveled across America for over seventy years. He was one of America's most respected revivalists. He is one of the most quoted preachers of the last century.

I appreciate my team at Sherwood for typing and reformatting articles and for publishing this compilation. Their willingness to serve allows me to introduce Dr. Havner to a new audience.

Michael Catt  
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## **The Lord Is at Hand**

It is interesting to note that some of the saints are beginning to awake to the meaning of world events shaping up so perfectly according to Bible patterns. One of the leading papers of my own denomination has lately carried a full-page article on the German-Russian confederacy in light of the Word. In November there is to be held in New York City a great prophetic conference with over a score of speakers from many different bodies of believers.

It would be unbelievable that so many Christians should be so indifferent to the signs of times did we not know that such a fact itself is a sign of the times, for in the last days scoffers shall arise. There are thousands of Christians in all our denominations to whom the great prophetic portions of the Scriptures are abandoned areas left to students of the apocalypse. It is amazing that Christians who claim to believe the Bible take almost a sneering attitude toward a subject that covers a tremendous part of the Bible. Take out of the Bible all that deals with prophecy and it would look like a Polish town after bombardment. Yet prophecy is dismissed with a shrug of the shoulders as though it were the crossword puzzle section of the Bible, provided for those who seek that sort of entertainment.

We know that many have been discouraged from interest in these things by those who have misused the subject to build fancy theories of their own. But every major subject in the Bible has been so misused that we might as well abandon the doctrine of salvation on those grounds.

Just as in Luther's day, God called men back to the message of justification by faith, and, as in Wesley's day, He called them back to free grace and evangelism. So today I believe that the neglected doctrine which needs to be preached is the Lord's return. Some preach it unwisely and too many preach it not at all, that is the trouble. I believe that it is the lost note today and that some of our great church bodies need the vision of it with the changed perspective which it brings and the sense of urgency it generates to transform such bodies into great agencies of God for evangelism.

No Bible student can deny that the early Christians were not only ready for the Lord's return, they were expectant and that sense of expectancy colored all their activity. The epistles pulsate with that note. Today it has been lost in favor of the social gospel or world conversion. We are out to bring the whole world into the Kingdom of God, something which is not in the Bible, and we are farther from it today than when we started. Evangelizing the world is one thing and converting the world is another. We have gotten mixed up in our objectives.

If we read the signs at all we cannot fail to see that the Lord is at hand in the sense of His imminent return. And He is also at hand in that He is always with us, accessible to our call and standing by to help us. With such assurance we need to get busy redeeming these last hours of this age. No other incentive can take the place of God's incentive and He has given us the blessed hope to encourage us and stir us to action in His name. Let us occupy till He come and live with that light in our eyes.

## **Be Ye Therefore Ready**

Our Lord spoke often of His return and always He joined it with a charge to be diligent as His servants that we be not found wanting. In the twelfth chapter of Luke He calls us who are entrusted with heavenly business to be ever ready for Him who will come as a thief in the night.

We are living in days when men ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" and even those entrusted with His message like the false servants of whom He spoke are saying today, "My Lord delays His coming" and are drunken and careless, absorbed in other concerns. Ministers seem to forget that eager expectancy for One Who may come any moment is the New Testament attitude. We have put off His coming to some remote day and even preachers speak lightly of those who think His coming may be soon. What better could describe the position of most Christians today than our Lord's own words, "My Lord delays His coming?"

In speaking of those who shall be beaten with few and many stripes Jesus recognized degrees of punishment. To whom much is given much is required. How great will be the churches who despise and misuse their great privilege!

Our Lord goes on to declare that He has come to start a fire on earth, the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, carrying with it the fire of persecution and suffering. He Himself first went through this baptism of suffering and He was "straitened till it be accomplished." He longed to suffer and die because of the blessing that should follow. As a woman in travail Christ underwent His travail of soul desiring to see the spiritual seed that should follow.

In this season of much smooth preaching of peace when there is no peace we do well to remember our Lord's next words in this connection: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division." He went on to declare that His gospel would divide homes and families in this present age because it naturally would separate men and women into two camps, those who gather with Him and those who scatter abroad. One day He will be the Great Gatherer but now He is the Great Divider.

He closes by reminding His hearers that they read the weather signs but cannot discern the signs of the times. It is so today. Men read the weather with more accuracy and confidence than they read the clear Bible portents of our Lord's imminent return. Just as the Jews of Christ's time were blind to His first coming, we are blind to His return. "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" It would seem that common sense would open your eyes to the meaning of the times. But it is a mark of the last days that scoffers ask where is the sign of His coming.

### **The Early and Latter Rain**

Throughout the Bible we read of the early and latter rain. In Deuteronomy 11:14, God promises Israel that, if they observe His commandments, He will give them the rain of their land in due season, the first rain and the latter rain. Job declares that, in the days of his prosperity, men respected him, "they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain" (29:23). Proverbs 16:15 tells us, "In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favor is as a cloud of the latter rain."

Jeremiah lamented, "the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain" (3:3). He charges that rebellious Israel no longer says, "Let us now fear the Lord our God, that gives rain, both the former and the latter, in his season" (5:24). These rains fell in Palestine, the first at sowing time, about November or December, the second about March or April to mature the ground for harvest. They are, therefore, the rain of sowing time and the rain of harvest. And more than passing significance attaches to the frequent mention of them.

More important passages in this connection we find in the Minor Prophets. In Hosea 6:3 we read, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come to us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." In Joel 2:23 we find, "Be glad then, children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he has given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the former rain and the latter rain in the first month." Zechariah 10:1 tells us, "Ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field."

Now these three prophets dealt with future blessings to come to Israel nationally after her long dispersion. All predict a kingdom age when the Jews, restored to their land and returned to their God, shall enjoy both material and spiritual blessing from the Lord. It is in Joel that we find that wonderful promise of the outpouring of the Spirit (2:28-33). This passage was quoted by Peter in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:16-21). But there are some verses in that prophecy that seem to reach beyond Pentecost: "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes."

There are prophesied two mighty outpourings of the Holy Spirit. The first came at Pentecost. It is God's early rain. At the end of the present age, when Israel is regathered and restored to the land, there will be a mighty effusion of His Spirit upon them. That is His latter rain. The first was the sowing time rain when the gospel first went forth. The second comes at the time of harvest. So Joel 2:28-32 becomes clear when viewed in the light of double reference, a principle without which much prophecy is confusing.

Finally, James admonishes us, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receives the early and the latter rain." Both rains must have fallen, the Pentecost outpouring upon the church and the outpouring of "the spirit of grace and supplication" upon Israel (Zechariah 12:10) before the world harvest is complete. While this may not be the first and literal explanation of the verse, as a spiritual application it is most precious. God first gathers His church, then Israel, but both make the full harvest.

### **The Mystery of Iniquity**

The second chapter of 2 Thessalonians gives us in clear outline the schedule of events in the last days. The Thessalonians became worried and though the day of Christ's return was already present. Paul comforted them by giving in detail the course of events at the end of the age.

We are told first that "the mystery of iniquity does already work." It is better translated "mystery of lawlessness" and nothing is more evident than the fact that we are in the midst of it today. It is a period of unprecedented crime. Our jails and penitentiaries are filled. Suicide, murder, divorce, immorality, kidnapping, theft, arson—all these infest the land and fill the newspapers. The devil is waging a worldwide campaign which will head up presently in the "man of sin." He is increasing the war spirit. He is making lukewarmness to abound in our churches. Through the false theories of evolution and higher criticism he undermines religious faith. He floods the land with false prophets. He is fast making ready the overthrow of government. It is all the mystery of lawlessness.

Next there must come an apostasy, “a falling away first.” One does not have to strain his eyes to see the churches departing from sound doctrine to fables; seminaries sending forth preachers and teachers who deny the faith; church members so identified with the world that no line of demarcation is any longer visible. Fads and isms, worldliness and indifference, modernism and Laodiceanism, have played their part. The apostasy is upon us.

This chapter tells us next (verse 7) that the tides of lawlessness are being hindered or “let” by someone who is eventually to be removed. Do you pick up your newspaper some morning expecting to read that the bottom has completely fallen out of society? Sometimes one wonders who we can last another week without the dam breaking and the floods of lawlessness completely inundating the land. Well, here is the reason: the Holy Spirit is holding back the evil until the time is ripe. Then He will be removed, we believe at the time the believers are taken away as described in 1 Thessalonians 4. Then we believe God will begin dealing with Israel nationally again, and His Spirit will operate much as He did in the Old Testament.

We read further that when the Restrainer is removed, the man of sin will be revealed. He is the antichrist in whom all evil will head up. We read in this chapter that he will oppose himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped so that he as God will sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God. This harmonizes with the account of the antichrist given in Daniel 9:27 and is the abomination of desolation spoken of by our Lord in Matthew 24:15.

But Paul tells us that this man of sin and son of perdition is to be destroyed by the brightness of Christ’s coming. Revelation 19:20 also tells us about his doom in the lake of fire. So here we have the order of the last days, the mystery of iniquity, the apostasy, the removal of the Restrainer, the manifestation of the man of sin and his destruction at Christ’s return.

What is our duty in the light of these things? Verse 15 of our chapter tells us. We are to stand fast and hold the traditions. “Traditions” is not a popular word today. Men ridicule those bound by “traditionalism.” But let us stand by the faith once for all delivered. We are on the winning side. Eternity will vindicate each blessed tradition in His Word.

### **The Day of the Lord**

There are those who think 2 Thessalonians chapter two proves that Christians of the present church must go through the horrors of the antichrist before Christ comes to receive His own. But the phrase “day of Christ” in this chapter should be translated “day of the Lord” and refers to the return of Christ to reign. We believe the church will already have been taken up before the revelation of the man of sin.

When the abomination of desolation spoken of in our last study stands in the holy place, we are told by our Lord (Matthew 24:15-26) that great suffering shall follow in Jerusalem, and immediately after the tribulation of those days Christ shall appear. This is His advent of glory (Titus 2:13) when He shall appear apart from sin unto salvation (Hebrews 9:28). It seems that just as there is a divine Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so evil will also head up at last a trinity: the devil, the antichrist, and the false prophet.

The judgment scene described in Matthew 25:31-46 is utterly at contrast with the judgment of Revelation 20:11-15. There is no resurrection mentioned, no books are opened, nations are judged, and the scene is on the earth while three classes are present: sheep, goats, and brethren. Many believe this

passage to mean a judgment of nations with regard to their treatment of Israel, “my brethren,” the Jewish remnant of the tribulation. Others hold that it is mainly a message on Christian service rather primarily on eschatological discourse.

Then Revelation 20 tells us that Satan is to be bound and shut up in the bottomless pit while Christ reigns on the earth a thousand years. This is the millennium around which so much controversy has raged. During this time Israel is to be regathered and to enjoy national prosperity in the land of Palestine with Jerusalem rebuilt, and Christ will sit upon the throne of David. Jerusalem will be the religious center of the earth (Zechariah 8:20-23). All nature will be redeemed, the lion and lamb lying down together (Psalm 72; Isaiah 11, 65:17-25; Romans 8:19-21).

At the end of this period there will be a revolt of Satan, who makes one final mad effort against Christ (Revelation 20:7-9). This ends in defeat, and the devil is cast into the lake of fire this time, where the beast and false prophet still are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then follows the judgment of the great white throne (Revelation 20:11-15) believed to be the judgment of the wicked. The earth is to be purged by fire (2 Peter 3:10-13).

Revelation 21 and 22 describe the final order of things, the new heaven and the new earth. It would be folly to add to that inspired picture of the believer’s eternity with God. There the tree of life, lost in Genesis, is reached in Revelation. But, mind you, the road lies through the gospel and the blood of Christ.

Such is the outline of God’s program in the ages. To add details beyond what is written is expressly forbidden (Revelation 22:18), but equally so to take away from the truths given (v. 19). And just because the study involves mysteries, we do grievous wrong to neglect prophecy. For unless we do know something of the things which shall be, our entire perspective is twisted and much well-meant endeavor is often beside the point.

### **The Man of Sin**

After the church has been taken up as predicted in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, there are terrible events to follow upon the earth: Satan’s supreme effort to dominate the earth will culminate in the rise of a fearful character known as the antichrist. He is the “little horn” of Daniel 7, the “abomination of desolation” of Matthew 24:15, the “man of sin” of 2 Thessalonians 2, and the “beast” of Revelation 13. He will be revealed when the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is removed (2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8). It is believed that he will head the restored Roman Empire, the ten horns of Daniel’s vision (Daniel 7). It seems that both civil and ecclesiastical power will head up in him (Revelation 13). Gentile world power and the apostate church will combine under his sway.

There are many modern tendencies that point toward the antichrist. He has been identified in the past with Caesar, Napoleon, Nero, Kaiser William, and a prominent church publication has found in the name of Adolf Hitler the identification number, 666 (Revelation 13:18). Of course, all such guesses are beside the point. There are many indicators today that point to this man of sin, but they are only guideposts. The present sign of the Blue Eagle in all our stores reminds us of one feature of antichrist, that no man shall be able to buy or sell without his mark (Revelation 13:17). Such signs are genuine pointers toward this dreadful being, but none of them are identifiable with him.



After the church is taken up the Jews will be returning to Palestine. The antichrist will deceive them into accepting him as the Messiah and will confirm a covenant with them (Daniel 9:27). The two witnesses will appear at this time and be killed (Revelation 11). In the midst of the seven-year period signified by the seventieth week of Daniel, antichrist will appear in the temple, stop the sacrifice and put up his own image for worship (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 13:14). This is the abomination of desolation Christ mentioned in Matthew 24:15, and described in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. This will be the “time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7) and the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21), covering the remaining three-and-a-half years. During this awful period a remnant of Jews will be saved and seated together with a great multitude of Gentiles who are said to have come through great tribulation (Revelation 7).

This period will be shortened else no flesh would be saved (Matthew 24:22). It will be ended by the Lord Jesus Christ, who will appear to deliver the Jewish remnant besieged by the Gentile world powers (Zechariah 12:1-9; Revelation 16:13-16). Revelation 17:8-18 also points to this event. Antichrist will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

Such, in broadcast outline, is the history of antichrist. There are few today, comparatively, who believe in such a person to come, for modern biblical interpretation has cleverly explained Bible references to him by identifying him with Antiochus Epiphanes or making of him merely a symbol of Jewish apocalyptic. Antiochus was indeed an adumbration of the antichrist, and others suggest him. But we believe, with the old commentators, that God’s Word prophesies a real personage yet to come in whom evil will head up in one supreme effort to dominate the earth.

### **The Next Great Event**

According to prophecy, the next great event in God’s program for the ages is the taking up of the true church. When he has finished taking out of the world a people for His Name, the ecclesia, the called-out ones, then the Lord Jesus shall take them up to meet Him in the clouds forever to be with Him. This great event is fully described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. It is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in John 14:3, “I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

The spirits of all dead believers are with the Lord (Philippians 1:23). Their spirits return with Christ and are united with their resurrected bodies. All living believers are caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. This raising of the bodies of believers is the first resurrection. Christ spoke of two resurrections (John 5:28, 29). They are separated by one thousand years (Revelation 20:5). All Christians dead are raised at the first, and the believers of the tribulation period that follows the taking of the church are raised and have a part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4). The second resurrection is of the wicked.

The idea of one general resurrection and judgment is not Scriptural. Christians may look for the coming of Christ for them at any time. This must be kept distinct from His coming in power to reign. It is not said that He comes to earth for His church, but that they rise to meet Him in the air. He does come definitely to earth at His return to reign.

So believers today may look for the Uptaker rather than the undertaker. One generation of believers will never die. We do not say, “Millions now living will never die,” for we know not when He will come. But it is easily possible, and, we think, highly probable. After their rapture the Word tells us things to come among the caught-up believers. They are to be rewarded according to works (1 Corinthians 3:9-14; 2

Corinthians 5:10). They are to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). They will return later with Christ to reign (2 Timothy 3:12; Revelation 20:6).

This truth of the sudden snatching away of believers and the leaving of unbelievers is borne out by our Lord's words in Matthew 24:40, 41: "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." This could not be accounted for on the basis of a general judgment.

The fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians describes the resurrection of believers. Our bodies will be instantly changed. They will be new and different bodies suited to their new life. This resurrection of the dead and change of the living is called the "redemption of the body" (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:13, 14).

There are those who urge that the rapture shall not occur until the man of sin of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 be revealed. But this is to take place before the return of our Lord in power as the milling stone of Daniel's vision, breaking Gentile world domination and ready to set up His kingdom.

"It may be at morn, when the day is awaking. When sunlight thro' darkness and shadow is breaking. That Jesus will come in the fullness of glory. To receive from the world His own."

### **Signs of the Times**

We live now in the church age. The world is not being converted, but God is calling out a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). Wheat and tares are growing unto harvest.

In Matthew 16:1-3, when the Pharisees and Sadducees asked Jesus for a sign, He answered, "When it is evening, you say, it will be fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be foul weather today; for the sky is red and lowering. O you hypocrites, you can discern the face of the sky; but can you not discern the signs of the times?"

God has given us certain unmistakable signs of the end of this age. True, we know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man will come (Matthew 25:13), and all date-setting is utterly unscriptural. But while we may not know the exact time, we can know the signs of the times.

Such passages as 2 Timothy 3:1-13 give an up-to-date picture of these days. Men will not expect the Lord's return (2 Peter 3). There will be a heaping of wealth (James 5:1-6). Laodiceanism, "neither-cold-nor-hot" lukewarmness, will characterize the last church period (Revelation 3:14-19). There will be false Messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes (Matthew 24:4-7).

The old Roman Empire is to be revived in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel (chapter 7). While, of course, this has not been consummated, there are remarkable indications in the work of Mussolini.

There is to be a movement of the Jews back to the Holy Land. The Jew is God's signpost of the ages. Owing his existence to a miracle, his history has been no less miraculous. He has been preserved through the centuries because he is to be restored to the land and nationally converted. That truth has been obscured nowadays by the idea that the Old Testament promises to the Jews are fulfilled in the church. But God's purposes with the church and with the Jew are utterly distinct.

When the Jews refused Christ, the gospel message was presented to the Gentiles. There has been a believing remnant among the Jews through the centuries, but nationally they have been in blindness. "Blindness in part happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25). When Christ has gathered His church, then God will deal again directly with the Jew. He is to be restored to the land and converted. There is abundant Scripture to this effect: Leviticus 26:40-45; Psalm 69:35, 36; Isaiah 11:10-16, 14:1, 2, 27:13, 51:1ff, 52:7-10; Jeremiah 16:14-16, 23:3-8, 31:1ff, Ezekiel 11:17-20, 28:25, 26, 39:25-29; Hosea 1:10, 11, 3:4, 5; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 2:12, 13; Zechariah 8:7, 8; Romans 11.

With this in mind, the present-day movement of the Jews back to Palestine and the remarkable new life which has stirred that country are full of historical significance.

We are also aware that the "mystery of iniquity" is already at work (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Lawlessness, everywhere on the verge of overrunning society, is being restrained by the Holy Spirit, and the signs of the approaching man of sin, foretold in this same chapter, grow abundant. No personage on the modern scene is the antichrist, but the signposts grow thicker.

God's Word gives plentiful signs of the times. The early church looked eagerly for His return. The old Bible scholars interpreted the signs in a literal fashion. It is a mark of the latter days that men shall turn from the literal truth of these indications to modernistic fables.

### **Prophecies of Christ**

The first coming of Jesus Christ was prophesied in detail. The exact manner of His coming was given in Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and call his name Immanuel." He was to appear in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Isaiah 9:6 foresaw His birth, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," and followed with a list of His titles.

The wonderful public ministry of the Lord Jesus was declared in Isaiah 61:1, 2, which He Himself quoted. His betrayal is seen in Psalm 41:9. He was to be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12), which would go to the potter (v. 13). His sufferings are prophesied in detail in Isaiah 50:6, Isaiah 53, and Psalm 22. These classic chapters describe, with all the minuteness of an eyewitness, His humiliation. He quoted the first verse of Psalm 22 while upon the cross, and the whole chapter is a vivid revelation of the agonies of crucifixion. A careful reading of these two chapters together with the Gospel accounts of His death is, to any reasonable mind, an overwhelming testimony to the inspiration of the Bible. That not one of His bones shall be broken is indicated in Psalm 34:20 and fulfilled in John 19:36. Psalm 69 also looks to His death with such details as His receiving gall and vinegar to drink (v. 21). His burial is clearly prophesied in Isaiah 53:9 and His resurrection in Psalm 16:8-10, a passage quoted in Acts 2:25-28 and 13:35.

With all these Scriptures in mind, how can anyone account for their exact and literal fulfillment except as the confirmation of revelation from God? Only direct inspiration of God can explain how these men saw, centuries before they took place, the details of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord. No Bible critic has ever been able to successfully offer any other answer. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

From the very first prophecy of the gospel, Genesis 3:15, the Messianic hope runs like a beautiful thread through all the Old Testament. It appears all along in cases of promise like Deuteronomy 18:16-18. Such

cases of hope did not turn out to be mirages, for the Lord Jesus came and fulfilled each and all. We believe that the promises of His return are not mirages either, but real declarations of things definitely to come to pass as literally as these were fulfilled.

We have dealt here with only those prophecies dealing with His first advent. Like two ranges of mountains, the prophets saw His two comings and they saw little of what lay between. It is therefore in the New Testament that we find the things of the church age expounded. But when we near the return of the Lord, the Old Testament again looms large with its visions of the coming King.

Even His disciples were slow to believe all that the prophets had spoken concerning His first advent, slow to see that Christ must have suffered those things and to enter into His glory (Luke 24:25, 26). We are as slow to believe all the prophets have spoken about His return. May He open our understanding that we might understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45)!

### **John the Baptist and Elijah**

The coming of John the Baptist fulfilled the very definite prophecy of Malachi 3:1, "Behold, I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me." But Malachi 4:5, 6 also records this prophecy: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

This prophecy still awaits fulfillment, for Jesus declared in Matthew 17:11, "Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things." We believe that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12 who are to appear before the Lord's return. But John the Baptist was a type of the Elijah to come so that Christ said of him, "And if you will receive it, this Elijah which was for to come" (Matthew 11:14), and in Matthew 17:12, "But I say unto you, that Elijah has already come and they knew him not but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." The angel declared to Zacharias before the birth of John, "And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Such are the outlines of a very interesting prophecy. Elijah, having appeared in type in John the Baptist before the first coming of our Lord, is to come literally before the return of Christ. It is interesting to note that Moses and Elijah, representing the law and the prophets, appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17). The transfiguration was a miniature presentation of the kingdom glory to be manifested when Christ returns. We believe that Moses and Elijah will be these witnesses of Revelation 11. It is objected that since "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27) and since Moses has died once, that he cannot be meant. But Hebrews 9:27 is God's rule to which He has the right to make exception. Enoch and Elijah were exceptions, on one hand, and it is reasonable that Moses could be an exception on the other. The very mystery of Moses' grave (Deuteronomy 34:6; Jude 9) lends interest to this study.

Anyway, we have seen in John the Baptist the fulfillment of Malachi 3:1, and because that has been accomplished so perfectly, we look for the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5, 6, of which the coming of John was only a typical and adumbrative fulfillment as Jesus was careful to point out.

Only the first clause of Malachi 3:1 was fulfilled in Christ's first advent. The rest of the verse as well as verses 2-5 look toward His return. Malachi, like the other prophets, saw the two comings of Christ blended in one horizon as we see two ranges of distant mountains and did not understand the great interval of the church age separating the two. This double vision explains many problems of prophecy. It is found in Psalm 2 and Isaiah 61:1, 2.

John, prefiguring Elijah who is to come, is also an illustration of another principle in prophecy by which a great event is typified by a similar but smaller event. So the fall of Jerusalem prefigures the return of Christ and Antiochus Epiphanes the antichrist.

### **Christ's Three Appearings**

The ninth chapter of Hebrews speaks of three separate and distinct appearings of the Lord Jesus, each with special mission in which you and I may share.

The first is given in verse 26: "Now once in the end of the world He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." That is His first advent, His coming as the Word made flesh, culminating on Calvary. That bloody sacrifice of Himself is lightly regarded in many circles, even church circles, today. A great denomination recently considered dropping such songs as "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood" from its hymnal. But the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus is the heart of His first coming. He regarded it so Himself. When you take "the sacrifice of Himself" out of His first appearing, you still have a sublime life and message, but you do not have a gospel of redemption. He came "to put away sin," "to give His life a ransom for many," and it was necessary, as He told the disciples of Emmaus, that He should suffer these things and enter into His glory.

Now that He has entered into His glory, He has other work to do. He appears for us there. Verse 24 says, "For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." It is stated beautifully in Hebrews 7:25: "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Is it not a blessed thought that Christ is pleading your case and mine with the Father?

A woman was advised to secure the services of a well-known lawyer in an approaching litigation. She delayed, but finally called at his office and asked him to take the case. "I am sorry," he replied, "but I have recently been appointed a judge. I cannot now plead for you, I can only judge you." Jesus is now our Advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1); give Him your case, lest you delay until the age of grace is over and He must then be your Judge!

The third appearing of the Lord Jesus is given in verse 28 of our chapter: "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." This is His second coming when He consummates His work of salvation. He does not come as Savior then, but to receive his own. That glorious event has been ignored and neglected nowadays, identified with world conversion or else misinterpreted by fantastic eschatologists. But it is an integral element of Bible truth, and we believe "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner" as He went away.

This three-fold order of His appearings must be observed in Christian experience. First, we trust Him for our salvation through the sacrifice of Himself. Then, we trust Him for daily keeping and security because He continually appears for us before the Father, and we have the promise that He is able to save completely (to the uttermost) those who come to God by Him. Finally, we wait for His return when our salvation shall be completed in our deliverance from even the very presence of sin. The first appearing deals with sin's penalty; the second with its power; the third with its presence.

As believers we "love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). But we love all His appearings, for each is necessary for our complete salvation.

### **Havner's Reflections**

Many Christians have been driven away from any serious interest in prophecy because so many who study it and preach it fail to live out its practical message. "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved" is a very thrilling statement and many there are who major on that, but forget the rest of it, "What manner of persons on you to be?"

In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul begins with a vivid picture of the Lord's return. When men shall say, "Peace and safety," sudden destruction shall come. We are not to be caught off-guard, for we who believe are of the day and must be sober. They that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. We do not expect this old world to wake up and take notice, but we are to watch and pray and be looking for and hastening the coming of the Lord. We are to arm ourselves with the Christian's panoply (verse 8) and be ready.

In verse 11, we are admonished to comfort and edify each other. Prophecy's message of consolation and edification is often sadly neglected. Christians quarrel and dispute over precious truths that are meant for our comfort and strength.

In verses 12 and 13, we are told to respect and esteem very highly God's ministers. Here many prophecy believers fall down in practice. If it were not so, there would not now be so many broken-hearted pastors who have gone to pieces trying to hold together bickering groups of "come-outer" fundamentalists who cannot even agree among themselves. It is high time that Christians learned their solemn obligation to obey God's under-shepherds (Hebrew 13:17) and copy them as they copy Christ. The spirit of division and strife and envying is as repugnant to God as immorality, for He groups it with the more loathsome sins in Romans 13:13. Strife and envying are there placed on a par with rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness.

In verse 13, we are told to be at peace among ourselves. In ten years of Bible conference work, traveling up and down the country, I can say that the bane of the prophetic group has been their failure to carry out the undoubted truth of prophecy into everyday duty. Not that all are guilty by any means, but there is so much discord among those who ought to be united in the face of world catastrophe that much of their testimony is nullified by their lack of true brotherly love and fellowship.

There are few enough of us as it is, and Satan knows that his best device is to separate us by internal strife. The old evil of splitting into Paulites and Cephasites and Apollonians with a sprinkling of Christ-party has put an effective bushel over a much-needed testimony.

It would appear that to really believe that we are nearing the Lord's return, that we do not belong here but are pilgrims and strangers with our citizenship in heaven, would bind us into a fervent unity as precious as that of the Christians in the catacombs. But such has not been the case. When we learn better to practice what we preach, the world will listen more respectfully to it.

### **In a Time Like This**

I am now living in Charleston, South Carolina, as pastor of the 250-year-old First Baptist Church. Readers are warmly welcomed to worship with us when in this very interesting and historic city.

This morning as we look over the news, we marvel that men and women of the Church of Christ should refuse to connect the things that are taking place daily with the plain prophecies of God's Word. Of course we know that it is one of the marks of the times that men will turn from the truth to fables (2 Timothy 4:4) and speak lightly of signs of the times (2 Peter 3:3, 4). Truly the prince of this world has blinded the people of the churches so that our great denominations give no testimony concerning prophecy and only a small remnant are awake and alive to the portents of the hour.

Recently Walter Lippmann returned from Europe with a report sensationally pessimistic for one of his conservative type. In the Balkan area storm clouds hover. The naval parley runs true to form with all get-togethers of nations that dread war, yet ardently prepare for it. Kidnappings and murders, revolt and rioting, all the miserable orgy of civilization spread across the pages of the sad story of the depravity of the human heart. Yet moral man expects to fashion from the rotten timbers of human nature an edifice of beauty. Remember the Chinese proverb: "You cannot carve rotten wood."

It is significant that in Romans 1:18-32 we have a picture of humanity from its very beginning, and in 2 Timothy 3:1-7 we have the same humanity in the last days. And what do we find in the last days? Has the race become a lovely brotherhood of peace and goodwill? Has the federation of the world been attained in a fine fellowship of light and love? To the contrary, we find exactly the same old vile and vicious characteristics and that evil men and seducers shall was worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

It is lamentable that, in the plain light of such Scriptural truth, even our Sunday School lessons on world peace should hover around the idea that somehow through the Christianizing of governments and rulers we shall create in this present age a warless world. That is not to say, of course, that we should not support whatever may make the world as peaceful as possible under the circumstances. In light of Romans 13:1-7, this is our manifest duty as citizens. But that is a very different thing from the futile program of those who expect to usher in world peace in this present age by the conferences and conclaves of unregenerate men. In spite of the well-meaning efforts of the optimists to brace us up with hypodermic rosewater of artificial better times ahead, there is a creeping sense of disillusionment and despair over the world. Men hope that somehow those in authority can turn the trick, but there is a growing suspicion that the disease is too big for the doctors.

The believer knows that in the Word of God we have God's program of the ages. We look for our Lord's return and know that He alone holds the answer to the enigma of the times.

## Fulfilled Prophecies

Continuing our journey along the path of prophecy, we find in Deuteronomy 4:26-30 a prediction to Israel through Moses that they would not dwell long in Canaan but be scattered among the nations and serve other gods. Every Jew we see today is a confirmation of this pronouncement, for they have been dispersed to the four corners of the earth and have forsaken the true God. Deuteronomy 28:63-68 also describes the same future for the Jew. How up-to-date it reads in the light, for instance, of the modern persecutions in Germany under Hitler!

God has told Abraham that He would bless those who blessed Israel and curse those who cursed Israel (Genesis 12:3). History has proven that nations persecuting the Jew have suffered, while those befriending the Jew have prospered. All Israel's bondages were predicted: the Egyptian in Genesis 15:13, 14, the 70 years captivity in Jeremiah 25:11, 12, and the worldwide dispersion in Deuteronomy 28:62-68 and Amos 9:1-10. Today the Jew is the anomaly among the races of men, scattered and wandering in exact fulfillment of these prophecies.

God also promised judgment upon all nations oppressing Israel (Genesis 15:14; Deuteronomy 30:7; Isaiah 14:1, 2; Joel 3:1, 8; Micah 5:7-9; Matthew 25:31-40). These nations are permitted to afflict Israel in God's chastisement for her sins, but finally retribution will return upon them. History has recorded the fulfillment of many of these with others still to be realized in the future.

Jeremiah (25:11, 12) and Daniel (9:2) understood that the captivity would last seventy years. It did so and ended with partial restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah.

Anyone who studies carefully all these prophecies will find that they paint in broad outlines the history of Israel up to the coming of John the Baptist. The bondage in Egypt and the deliverance, disobedience, and captivity, and the prospect of restoration, were all declared in advance. And through all this period, brightest of all shone the hope of a coming Messiah.

Now the prophecies of the Messiah took two forms. Some of them, as in Isaiah 53, pictured Him as a suffering Servant, despised and rejected of men, brought as a lamb to the slaughter. Others, as in Zechariah 14, presented Him coming in glory to vanquish his enemies, regather Israel, and reign victoriously. Of course the first group referred to Christ's first coming, the second to His return at the end of the age. But the Jew made the terrible blunder of confusing the signs. He looked only for the reigning Messiah, and when Jesus came in the flesh, His own received Him not (John 1:11). His own disciples were stupid in understanding so that the risen Lord said to two of them, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25).

As we proceed further we shall observe that history records the fulfillment of each prophecy concerning Christ and God's purpose through Him as they fall due. The exact fulfillment of all due up to the present time convinces us that those yet to be shall be as completely carried out when the time comes.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:19-21).



## Concerning Prophecy

No portion of theology is more neglected nowadays than eschatology, which treats of things to come. Notwithstanding the fact that about one-fourth of the text of the Bible was prophetic when written, the subject of prophecy is handled almost irreverently by many professedly evangelical Christian teachers and utterly ignored by others, while cranks and extremists prey upon the ignorance of church people, leading many astray and disgusting others. Sunday School lessons pass over the great prophetic truths; preachers avoid exposing their woeful ignorance about mysteries they could understand; and with the average Christian the matter of prophecy savors of Russelism and a wild dispensationalism. Under the impression that it is all a puzzle that cannot be assembled, he avoids it altogether.

But prophecy cannot be so easily dispensed with, for it is a vital part of the whole of God's revealed truth. Nothing has distorted more the whole fabric of modern Christian thought than the false perspective resulting from mistaken eschatology. The new interpretation of the great prophetic section has spelled confusion all along the line.

God has given us in the Bible His plan for the ages. Of necessity, great portions of this revelation had to be predictive as it unfolded. Men had to understand something of where they were going to know better how to go. Since Jesus Christ is the central theme of the Bible, these prophecies revolved around Him. The first prophecy recorded, that of Enoch in Jude 14, 15, looks to His return in glory. The greater part of the prophetic story gathers around His two advents, the first as a suffering Savior and the second as a triumphant King.

But not all of prophecy directly concerns Him, and as we travel in these articles the path of prophecy is very interesting to note, also the lesser predictions which have been or are being fulfilled before our eyes.

The first major prophecy concerns Noah's predictions as to the future of his sons (Genesis 9:25-27). In this passage he declares that the children of Canaan, the son of Ham, shall be a servile race. This has been proven abundantly in the black races. Shem is to be blessed and through the Jews came God's written revelation, and from Shem, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. Since the Jews conquered Canaan, the Canaanites became their servants as verse 26 declares. Then Noah said, "God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." Exactly that is true today with the white Gentiles scattered over most of the world, with the British dwelling in Palestine! History has registered the perfect fulfillment of those three verses.

In Genesis 15:13, 14 God told Abram that his descendants should be strangers and servants in a land not theirs and that they would eventually come out from the land with great substance. This was fulfilled in the Egyptian bondage and the deliverance under Moses.

Another outstanding prophecy which subsequent history bore out in all details is Jacob's predictions from His deathbed concerning his sons (Genesis 49:1-28). The tribes which sprang from these sons developed the characteristics he mentioned. Of Judah he said, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Judah kept at least a trace of her authority in the Sanhedrin until Jesus came. After the destruction of Jerusalem it vanished, and unto Jesus has the gathering of a people from out of the world—His church—continued unto this day. Marvelous path of prophecy! Sufficient proof in itself that the Old Book is the very Word of God!

## Prophecies of Things Since Christ

The church age, the period from the first to the second coming of Christ, was not clearly revealed to the Old Testament prophets. “What manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow (1 Peter 1:10-12) was not revealed to them, but only that the vision was for us and not for themselves. They saw the two mountain ranges of His two advents, but not clearly the valley of the church age between.

This period Christ Himself covered in Matthew 13. He said, “Therefore I speak to them in parables. For truly I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear and have not heard them.” We read, “All these things Jesus spoke unto the multitude in parables; and he did not speak unto them without a parable; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying, ‘I will fill my mouth in parables; I will utter things kept in secret from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 13:34, 35).

In these parables Jesus described the course of the present age. The church will gather into it good and bad. Wheat and tares will grow together until harvest. There is no indication here of world conversion, but exactly the opposite. A world that will be as in the days of Noah certainly cannot be called a converted world. Indeed the Lord exclaims, “When the Son of Man comes shall He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Many believe that the second and third chapters of Revelation contain, besides the local applications to the actual churches mentioned and the practical applications to all churches and Christians, a prophetic application and that they describe the history of the church age. Thus Ephesus represents the church of that time, Smyrna the period of the persecutions, Pergamum the worldly church after Constantine, Thyatira the Papacy, Sardis the Reformation, Philadelphia the true church, and Laodicea the church at the time of the return.

The event of greatest prophetic significance in all the early church age was the fall of Jerusalem. In the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew, the disciples asked three questions: When shall these things be—the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple—and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world? The question as to the fall of Jerusalem is answered most clearly in Luke 21:20-24. That event is a type on a small scale of His final return. It points forward to another siege of Jerusalem to come to pass at the end of this age when the abomination of desolation, the antichrist, will appear in the holy place. He, in turn, was prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes prophesied in Daniel, who desecrated the temple and altar. Compare Daniel 9:2-27 with Matthew 24:15.

The prophecy of Jesus in Luke concerning the fall of Jerusalem was fulfilled to the letter only a few years later. His prophecy of the end of the age was equally definite.

We now face the future to see what the Word reveals of things yet to be. We have seen that all predictions of the past have been carried out to the letter. We believe those of the future will be fulfilled in like fashion.