

The Fruit of Prophecy

In this short series we have only scratched the surface of the importance of prophecy, and while part of my reasoning in presenting this was in preparation for our study through the gospel of Matthew, my hope is that these messages will have sparked a greater interest in your own hearts to look more deeply into these things for yourselves.

Last week we looked at future prophecy concerning God's plan for the Nations of the world, and the nation of Israel, but the question arises for us is *"where does the church fit in?"*

A disclaimer before we continue, and maybe one that I should have mentioned in an earlier study. When it comes to Bible prophecy, and specifically the timeline of events surrounding the second coming of Christ there is a fair amount of disagreement among believers. Even within Shoreline, there are some people who hold a different view.

It's important to keep in mind that while the things we will be discussing today are important, these are not things that we need to be in complete agreement over in order to maintain fellowship. Our understanding of how the church fits into the prophetic timeline does impact our interpretation of other scriptures and can also profoundly impact how we respond to current events, our salvation and therefore our fellowship does not hinge on our views of the end times.

With that said, at Shoreline we hold what is called a pre-millennial (*that Jesus will return before the millennial kingdom*) and a pre-tribulation (*that the church will be removed from the world before the tribulation period*) view. I hold this firmly, but also with humility as I recognize that this is not an easy subject to navigate, and that those who hold differing views have in their own minds good and biblical reasons for doing so.

- You may recall from last week the prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks, a prophecy in which Gabriel explains to Daniel that there are a total of 70 weeks (490 years) determined by the Lord for Daniels people and for the holy city:

Dan 9:24

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.*

NOTE: We saw last week that 69 of these weeks (483 years) have passed, yet there remains another week of years that has yet to be fulfilled in God's plan for Israel.

- Significantly, while the end of this 69th week coincides with the death of Christ it also marks the birth of His church. This seems to be what Paul alludes to in his letter to the Romans when he teaches about the relationship between God's work with Israel and the church.

Rom 11:25-27

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

*"The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins."*

- We are currently living in a time when God is still moving and working among the nations through the church, but there will come a day when the fullness of the gentiles will come in and He will once again turn His focus to the fulfilment of His promises toward Israel and at this time the seventieth week will begin.

NOTE: This is described as a time in which God will bring judgment to the nations and chastening to Israel, which is why the prophet Jeremiah identifies it as the time of Jacobs trouble in 30:7.

Where is The Church

a) In Tribulation

QUESTION: Where is the church during this final week of judgment and chastening?

NOTE: There are some who believe the church will remain on earth during this time, while others believe that the church will be here for only part of this time. Others believe that the

church will be taken up to be with the Lord before this final week begins in an event described by Paul in 1 Thessalonians that is called the rapture.

- In his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul writes

1 Thessalonians 5:1-10

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. 3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

NOTE: One of the ways the day of the Lord is described in the Bible is that it will be a day of great wrath.

Zeph 1:14-16

*14 The great day of the Lord is near;
It is near and hastens quickly.
The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter;
There the mighty men shall cry out.
15 That day is a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of devastation and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
16 A day of trumpet and alarm
Against the fortified cities
And against the high towers.*

1 Thessalonians 5:4

4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. 5 You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

- It stands to reason that if the day of the Lord is a time of wrath, and we have been appointed to salvation from His wrath that He will remove us before pouring out His wrath upon the world.

EXAMPLE: Genesis 19:16-33 Abraham intercedes for his nephew Lot, who is dwelling in a land that is set for judgment. Here we gain a critical understanding of God's willingness to show mercy to the wicked in order to spare the righteous. If there were more than ten righteous, God would spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, however there were not but rather than destroy the righteous with the wicked, God delivered Lot.

- Tribulation is a part of following Christ, Jesus promises it.

John 16:25

In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

- But I believe that a mistake is made when this time of tribulation or the time of Jacob's trouble is not seen as a time of God's judgment and wrath toward the nations and a time of chastening and salvation for Israel.

NOTE: Paul consistently teaches that God's wrath will be poured out upon unbelievers.

Ephesians 5:5-7

5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Colossians 3:5-7

5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

- It is my firm belief that the church will be delivered from this time, and while this view fills me with hope as it was meant to comfort the early church, I also recognize that as the time draw nearer the days will grow darker. We should expect increasing persecution, deception, and rebellion. I also believe that through this, we will see the purifying work of Christ within His church the days preceding the rapture.

Because of these things, the study of future prophecy ought to have an impact on how we live our lives today, and we'll take a few moments to consider some of the affects we can expect when we take these things seriously.

Considering future prophecy helps us to:

1. Prepare

EXAMPLE: Preparation is important for so many things in life. One of the most stressful but exciting times of preparation for me was the day I got married. In Jesus' time however, this preparation as taken to a different degree.

- The wedding would begin with a betrothal, where the father of the bride and the groom would sign an agreement, and a gift would be given.
- This period of time would last for approximately one year, during which the son would return to his father's house and prepare a place for his bride.
- Upon the fathers approval, the bridegroom would return for his bride in what was a surprise for her and the wedding procession would begin through the city street in the evening.

NOTE: With this context in mind, Jesus teaches His followers an important lesson in preparedness that they are to....

a) Remain ready

Matt 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' 12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

APPLICATION: We can prepare for His return and remain ready by ensuring a healthy and abiding relationship with Him and His Spirit. Is your lamp filled?

- Following this parable, Jesus presents another that teaches His servants that they are to...

b) Remain faithful.

Matt 25:14-30

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. 16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18 But he who

had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. 19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' 21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' 22 He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' 23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. 27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

APPLICATION: This parable reminds us that it's not about what you haven't been given, but how faithful you are with what you have been given that truly matters. What has Jesus placed in your hands? Are you squandering it? Are you wasting it? Are you burying it? Are you faithful, or are you lazy? Are you prepared for your master to settle His accounts?

2. Pursue

a) Holiness

2 Peter 3:10-18

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what

manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

1 John 3:1-3

3 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

b) Heaven

Col 3:1-4

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

NOTE: In Hebrews 11, the author presents to us examples of faithful men and women from the Old Testament, but what was it that drove them to do the things they did?

Heb 11:13-16

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

- These men and women of faith never forgot the promises of God, and were willing to bet this life that God was faithful! Some of the final words of assurance that Jesus offered to His disciples are found in

APPLICATION: Do you know dear saint that Jesus has a place prepared for you? Or have you forgotten, become distracted, and allowed the pursuit of earthly things to take precedent in your heart and minds?

3. Produce

a) Patience

- In chapter 5 of his letter, James firmly warns the wicked of their impending judgment, quickly following that up with an exhortation to believers who lived under the oppression of the wicked.

James 5:7-8

7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. 8 You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

- The idea is that they need to be longsuffering, having their hearts established or strengthened and stabilized in the promised return of the Lord!

APPLICATION: James' exhortation appears to be drawn from his own personal conviction and expectation of the coming of the Lord. When we have faith that the time of judgment and the time of harvest will come, it helps to maintain and produce patience in our lives!

Gal 6:9

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

b) Joy

- Have you ever found yourself living without the joy you once experienced as a believer? There is a good chance you have lost sight of the return of Christ;

the sturdy of prophecy can help us to maintain an eternal perspective and fill us with hope and joy!

1 Peter 1:3-9

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

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.

NOTE: Peter speaks of joy that surpasses the grief of trials.

APPLICATION: If you know Christ, my hope is that you would come to know the hope and joy that come through the earnest expectation of His soon return! He is coming again, and may this impact us in such a way that we would redeem every moment that we have to remain faithful to His calling upon us as a church – to Know Him and to make Him known!