

7 Reasons Why Some Pastors Don't Preach on End-Time Prophecies

After 68 years in the ministry and guest speaking in hundreds of pulpits, I often wonder why many ministers are so silent on teaching Bible prophecy from their pulpits, particularly when at least 28 percent of the Bible was prophetic at the time it was written.

Dr. John Walvoord, the great prophecy scholar, identified more than 1,000 prophecies in his book *The Bible Prophecy Handbook*. Of those prophecies, more than half have literally been fulfilled, assuring us that the other half are end-time prophecies that will also be fulfilled literally. These fulfilled prophecies should make it easy to believe that we are living in or very near what the Bible calls "the latter days" and "the end times."

Among the many fulfilled end-time signs, none is more obvious than the very existence of the Jewish people now living in their own homeland, having been driven or voluntarily migrated there from more than 170 nations of the world during the last 125 or so years.

Anyone familiar with this greatest end-time prediction recognizes what Jesus Christ meant in the Olivet Discourse when He said, "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: When its branch becomes tender and grows leaves, you know that summer is near" (Matt. 24:32). The fig tree represents the nation of Israel. In other words, when the Jewish people begin to gather back into their land, you will know the sign of His return and the end is "near."

Many prophecy scholars consider the Olivet Discourse as the most important end-time prophecy in the New Testament.

Personally, I believe it indicates that between the Islamic terrorism of the Middle East and many other signs of the end, we may be near what I call "the end of the end times." The tragedy is that many of our church pulpits are nearly silent on the subject.

As an evangelistic Bible-teaching pastor, I find there is nothing more inspiring to evangelism and spiritual growth than preaching on Bible prophecy and the certainty of Jesus' Second Coming. (It is the only source of hope and comfort for people living at a time when secular man has so obviously proven himself incapable of coping with the chaos that is exploding in much of our world, particularly in and around Israel).

Yet the amazing thing is that here we are, living in a time when God has revealed much of His wonderful plans for our future eternal life in His Word, yet many pulpits remain silent about this comforting truth that is so obvious by studying fulfilled prophecy. Why? I believe there to be several reasons. Consider some of the following:

1) A minister does not take the Bible literally, as God intended. Many mainline and some Reformed churches do not take the Bible literally. Whenever you spiritualize or allegorize God's meaning, you make it all but unintelligible. Instead, those who do not take the Bible literally often ridicule those of us who do, accusing us of a "wooden, literal interpretation of Scripture."

We believe that God said what He meant when He spoke through His Holy Spirit to special prophets and apostles, yet we also should understand what He meant to their generation and make a common-sense application to our own. Language has a way of changing through the years. After 300 years, it is difficult to understand Chaucer and Shakespeare in their original language. Parts of the Bible were written more than 3,000 years ago. We are fortunate today to have many modern translations and study Bibles in which Bible scholars have

properly interpreted the modern equivalent to the ancient Scriptures.

We also believe there are many passages that include symbols, metaphors and figures of speech that must be considered in light of their original context to assure that we have exactly the original meaning.

2) A minister takes the Bible literally, except the 28 percent that is prophetic. Many otherwise evangelical churches have adopted the strange idea, propounded by Augustine in the fifth century A.D., that the Bible should be taken literally except for the prophetic passages. Thus, they avoid teaching prophecy even amid the many signs that exist in our modern era that are obvious signs of the end. One such sign is the miraculous return of the nation of Israel to the Holy Land in our own generation. Israel's very existence 4,000 years after Father Abraham started the Hebrew people, even as many other nations have sunk beneath the sands of time, is itself a miracle. However, today, Israel exists and occupies the daily news on TV, radio and the media worldwide, exactly as the prophets and apostles predicted for the last days.

3) A minister receives his education from secular educators. Too many seminaries and even Christian colleges have employed professors and teachers on the merit of earned "accredited graduate degrees" from secular colleges, where the core educational program either was secular and hostile to God and the Bible, or simply ignored them altogether. Many of these professors ridicule those who would teach the divine nature of the Bible, particularly that of future prophecy.

My good friend, Dr. Howard Hendricks, propagated a very important educational principle: "You cannot impart what you do not possess." The ugly fact is many of our pastors silent on prophecy don't deal with the subject because they know so little about it. Educators who had pastoral experience themselves did not plan their curriculum, but they had

“accredited graduate degrees.” That might help their university or seminary get accreditation from the regional accrediting association, but it also means pastors are not trained to “preach the Word” as the apostles Paul, Peter, James and others admonished. It would be better for churches everywhere if seminaries found experienced men with two or three decades of successful pastoral experience to teach the next generation how to pastor and preach the Word of God.

4) A minister is not willing to do the hard work of studying God’s Word. I know firsthand that it takes hard work, and study is hard work. That requires a pastor with strong self-discipline in studying the Bible so he can impart a well-thought-out biblically based message in the fire of the Holy Spirit. I understand the need to minister to the many needy souls in the congregation, plus church personnel and other unexpected problems that arise for every pastor. However, when it comes to preaching, I shall never forget the advice of my preacher and uncle, Dr. E.W. Palmer. He said to me, “Son, never go into the pulpit unprepared. Tear off big chunks of beefsteak from the Word of God and feed it to your people and be evangelistic.” With God’s help, I have tried to follow that advice.

The importance of sermon preparation was graphically illustrated to me one night after one of our many Family Life Seminars with Christian psychologist Dr. Henry Brandt. He never criticized his pastor privately to me except that night. I noticed he was heavy hearted when he blurted out, “My pastor never studies enough to minister to the needs of our congregation. Every week I go to church after rubbing shoulders with many needy people with the prayer, ‘Oh, man of God, I need to hear a message from God today to inspire me to be a spiritual blessing in this mixed-up world of ours.’ But my pastor doesn’t study the Word enough to give us a powerful message from God.” The pastor didn’t last long at that church.

To be honest, that conversation went straight to my heart as I

began to examine my own study habits. Busy husbands and fathers have every right to expect a soul-stimulating message so they can be spiritually encouraged by learning biblical truths when they attend our services. That cannot be done unless the pastor carefully studies his Bible before he steps into the pulpit. It is true that while we are commissioned to preach the whole counsel of God, nothing is more inspiring than preaching on some of the many promises of Jesus' soon coming. For it is what the apostle Paul called "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), and at least twice wrote that we can "comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18).

5) A minister is not willing to be an avid reader. A good preacher must be an avid reader. The apostle Paul advised the young preacher Timothy, his son in the faith, to give attention to reading so he could make good use of his preaching gift and be a good example for the believers (1 Tim. 4:9-16). That pastoral advice from the well-traveled church builder and experienced apostle Paul is very appropriate for all pastors today.

While it is important that we read extensively today, it is doubly important for pastors and teachers to not only read the writings of Spirit-filled men but more importantly, God's Word. If you read the Bible regularly and memorize those passages that particularly speak to you, or those that answer specific questions you might have, the Holy Spirit can bring them to your remembrance when you need them most.

6) A minister is misguided by charlatans, zealots and date setters. Another reason pulpits are often silent on prophecy is because of the abuse by some charlatans, misguided zealots and even founders of well-known false cults. Many of these have disregarded true prophecy teaching by setting dates that proved to be untrue and was forbidden by our Lord and His apostles outright. This is even more reason why pulpits should be used to teach the truth about the end times and future

prophecy, so Christians won't be deceived as we approach the Lord's coming and the end of the age.

7) A minister believes people are not interested in Bible prophecy. Some pastors believe the false idea that Christians are not interested in Bible prophecy. That notion may have been popular after World War II when peace was prominent, but that is long gone. We are living when "wars and rumors of wars" are on almost everyone's mind (Matt. 24:6). It doesn't look like peace in our lifetime is close to being on the horizon any time soon. In addition, rogue nations now have the atomic and neutron bombs, and Iran is rapidly on the march to get both of them and a delivery system that could reach the whole world in the next decade—hardly the stuff that promotes a good night's sleep.

Actually, the notion that people are not interested in Bible prophecy is a tool of Satan to lull the church and evangelistic-minded Christians to sleep. Nothing energizes the body of Christ to soul-winning evangelism like teaching about the soon coming of Christ and the end of the age.

For example, one of the prime reasons we know that Jesus is the one and only Messiah sent by God to this world is because He fulfilled more than 109 prophecies of the Old Testament during His brief 33 years of life. No other person even comes close to that kind of fulfillment. Yet Bible scholars tell us there are 321 prophecies of His Second Coming to rapture His church before the seven-year Tribulation and the setting up of His 1,000-year millennial kingdom. Since we know His first coming is a historical fact, we can be confident that His Second Coming will be true too.

I personally know many of the pastors of growing churches and megachurches throughout this country. It is not surprising to me that many of them preach often on Bible prophecy. People are eager to hear about the end times and what God has to say about it.

If you will excuse the personal illustration, I pastored a good church in San Diego for 25 years. Dr. David Jeremiah was called as my replacement in 1981. This year on Easter Sunday, 34 years later, that same church had 13,000 people in attendance at their multiple worship services, overflows and several extension campuses. Interestingly enough, both Dr. Jeremiah and I often preached on Bible prophecy. In fact, during the nearly 60 years that the two of us pastored that church, we both preached through the book of Revelation twice. And this is the one Bible book many pastors never teach because they were taught in seminary that “it is too difficult for God’s people to understand,” or even worse, “church people are not interested in prophecy.” I think both excuses are a lie from the devil himself.

Preaching fulfilled prophecy proves God’s faithfulness to His people in the past. Future end-time prophecies teach us about the wonderful plan He has for our incredible future. I trust you attend a church where your pastor preaches on Bible prophecy. After all, the apostle Paul called it “the blessed hope.” If you hear it in your church, read about it in your Bible, study it like the Bereans in the early church, memorize it and meditate on it, the apostle John and our Lord promised you a “blessing”: “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near” (Rev. 1:3).

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Watch Tim LaHaye share the true foundation of all Bible end-time prophecy at .