

The Signs of the Times

When those planes hit the World Trade Center towers in NY and the Pentagon in Washington, DC on 9/11/2001, I remember thinking, "Is this it? Is this the start of a new world war and the end of our world, as we know it?" Obviously, that wasn't the end of the world because here we are two decades later.

At that point in time, I wasn't an ardent student of the prophecies in the Bible. As so many others, I put other things as priority over God – school, my career, my family, my pets. But, also like so many people in that day, I wondered about the times we were in and where we were headed. The attack on the Twin Towers was, for me, a wake up call.

While that attack wasn't an exact fulfillment of Bible prophecy, though it was an indication of things to come, it may have been a wake up call for others to start looking at what is going on in our world and see the events as they really are. I know many people, on that day and in the days that followed, put aside their complacency and started asking questions about the times we are in. Fast forward to today and you can hardly scroll through social media, or read newspaper headlines, without seeing some reference to Bible prophecy and the times in which we live.

Why are so many people talking about the End Times today? One reason is that God said *"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."* (Daniel 12:4, KJV)

So the words about the End Times that God gave Daniel were not to be opened, or understood, until the times of the end. But when those words are to be opened, *"many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."* Are we now in those times where the words have been unsealed and understanding of the End Times increases?

When I was a child, my family attended and were members of Southern Baptist churches in every town we lived in. In those years, I can't remember a single lesson on Bible prophecy. It wasn't until I was grown and out on my own that I started hearing about the book of Revelation, the Rapture, the AntiChrist, and the battle of Armageddon. Even then, though, I took it all with a grain of salt, "well, it will happen, but surely not in my lifetime." It was impossible to look at the world of that time (60s-70s) and imagine a One World Government, or a One World Religion. One World Religion? There are some estimates of over 30,000 Christian denominations worldwide – and that's just the "Protestants"! We couldn't even get along within our own churches and denominations and someone is going to bring us all together? Impossible!

I wonder now if there were people standing on the banks of the Red Sea with the Egyptian Army on their heels, and thinking, "How will we get across this? It is impossible! We are doomed."

God has a way of making the impossible look easy and He isn't done yet.

There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament, for a total of 66 books. Of those 66 books, there is only one that gives a promise to the reader, simply for reading it. *"³ Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."* (Revelation 1:3, KJV)

So God's plan was to seal up understanding of the End Times until we are close to and/or in those times and then give a blessing to those who seek out the answers by reading His Word.

Of course, Revelation is not the only book in the Bible that gives us prophecy. In fact, the Bible is nearly 1/3 prophecy. Why is this important? In studying the Bible, we learn about the “law of proportions”, which simply means that the more a subject is written about in the Bible, the more important it is to God. With nearly one-third of the Bible about prophecy, it must be pretty important to God. Of course, not all that prophecy is about the End Times, and, in fact, some of that has already been fulfilled. Just look at the prophecy of the fig tree in Isaiah. Many people relate this to the rebirth of the nation of Israel in 1948 – several millennia after the prophesy was written!

The big question remains, “Why should we, as children of God, study prophecy?” There are some, in fact, who say that studying prophecy is a waste of time, even a distraction from our growth in Christ and the mission He has given us. Rick Warren, in his popular book *The Purpose Driven Life* writes, “If you want Jesus to come back sooner, focus on fulfilling your mission, not figuring out prophecy.”¹

I tend to be very goal-oriented and can get very focused on achieving whatever goal is set before me; sometimes to the detriment of other things I should or could be doing. In fact, as I sit here and write these words, I can just look around my house and see several things I could be doing, rather than sitting in my favorite chair and pounding on this keyboard. So I can, to some extent, understand what Mr. Warren is saying. But I do not agree with him. There are many ways in which we benefit from a study of the prophecies in the Bible: 1) we learn about God’s faithfulness in the fulfillment of past prophecies, 2) we know the Bible is the unerring Word of God by knowing about those past fulfilled prophecies, and 3) the study of God’s Word about what is coming gives us hope for the future.

So, let us hang onto that blessing from God that is promised in the book of Revelation and learn more about who He is, by taking a look at where we are in Bible prophecy and what He says is coming.

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¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), page 286.