

BIBLICAL PROPHECY: AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN LIVING A GENUINE AND USEFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE

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Some years ago a woman approached me at the beginning of a prophecy conference where I was ministering and informed me that she was not a fan of messages on Bible prophecy. I was, of course, intrigued as to why this was the case. Her reason was that she was tired of the speculation and the sensationalism that seemed to always surround prophetic preaching. What she wanted was a Bible message that helped her live her Christian life in a more authentic way. She felt that when Jesus returns, then He will return and there is nothing that can be done to hinder or hasten His return. Meanwhile, she had to live her Christian life in the “real” world. Bible prophecy to her lacked substance and was simply out of touch with “real life.” What she failed to recognize was that “real life” can only be lived to its fullest when prophetic truth is known and embraced by the believer.

At another prophecy conference where I was participating, the pastor of the church said that he was very glad that I was there, since he knew very little about Bible prophecy and felt his people should have some exposure to the subject. It seems that at the seminary he attended, the consensus was that eschatology was so unclear and controversial that time was better spent on matters of greater significance. The pastor did not seem to be convinced of this but nevertheless was a product of that school which helped shape his approach to preaching and teaching. What he failed to appreciate was that prophecy was a key ingredient in bringing his people into a genuine walk with the Lord, the very thing he wanted to see take place in his church.

The woman and the pastor seem to represent a significant part of the Church today. Unfortunately it is true that prophecy has been abused by too many preachers and, of course, by non-preachers such as those on the History Channel. But the church must not ignore biblical prophecy or marginalize it out onto the periphery of the unimportant. Pastors who do not regularly include the truths of the prophetic Word in their preaching and teaching deprive their people of one of the most significant elements in living godly, authentic Christian lives in today’s world. In doing so, they really do a terrible disservice to their people.

Those who fail to inform their flock of things to come do not follow the example of Christ and the Apostles whose teachings were peppered through and through with truths about future things. Even New Testament writings that are not normally considered eschatological are filled with exhortations and instructions based on future events. For example, James makes eight such references in his letter and Peter refers to prophetic events almost thirty times in his two epistles. Jude, Hebrews and Paul’s writings are simply packed with statements about

future events. The Gospels record dozens and dozens of statements about future things in the teachings of the Lord Jesus. Why is there such an emphasis on prophetic events in the ministries of Christ and the Apostles? It is because they knew that these truths about the future are essential in living a life that is wise, holy and godly. These truths give the believer needed strength to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God” while at the same time cultivating the much needed “two world view” in the mind and heart of the believer.

The Biblical “Two World View”

A “two world view” can be described as *living well for Jesus Christ in this world because there is a clear focus on the world to come*. When believers do have this clear focus on and understanding of the world to come, their lives will be lived with greater authenticity and with greater consistency. This is *the* biblical approach to life found in the Scriptures whether it be the Old Testament saint who “died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth (Heb. 11:13) or the New Testament saint who understood that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18). And it has been the thinking of serious Christians over the centuries. Years ago, C.S. Lewis observed the need for this “two world view.”

“Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things that a Christians is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this world. Aim at heaven and you will get earth ‘thrown in’: aim at earth and you will get neither.”¹

One can only wonder what he might write today as he analyzed the North American church in this new millennium.

Over the last few decades, it seems that the vision of the world to come has become badly blurred in the American church. Evidence seems to indicate that we have steadily embraced more of a “one world view” which focuses instead on improving our lot in the present world. Much of the emphases of contemporary preaching and writing has been

on how we can “succeed” and enjoy life here and now. But while we have been hard at work trying to recreate Eden now, we have strayed from the path walked by the saints of old. These understood that while God has given us many good things to enjoy in this world (1 Tim. 4:4-5), this world must not be our focus since we are strangers and aliens (Heb. 11:9, 13; 1 Peter 2:11). They would teach us that the world we live in is to be viewed as a battleground and not a playground.

The one world view that is prevailing in the church has resulted in scandalous behavior that is destroying the vitality and impact of the evangelical church in North America. According to a recent article based on current studies by Gallup and Barna, American Christians “are as likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered, and sexually immoral as the world in general.”² This situation is not the product of a biblical “two world view.”

Biblical prophecy understood and embraced will have significant, positive results in the believer’s life. The following realities are set forth in the Scriptures and are worthy of our thoughtful consideration.

(1) BIBLICAL PROPHECY UNDERSTOOD AND EMBRACED GIVES NEEDED HELP IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST PERSONAL SIN.

Serious believers are very aware of the “sin which so easily entangles us” (Heb. 12:1) and sincerely wish that their flesh was not so powerful. But these also understand that focusing on the Lord’s return and our appearance before Him, which could be at any moment, is a great help in dealing with personal sin. We can say “no” to many sinful and suspect things in this world when we are looking towards heaven waiting “for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20).

Imagine for a moment that the angel Gabriel showed up at your bedside tonight and informed you that Jesus was going to return sometime this month. Assuming that it really was Gabriel, do you think you would have a serious problem with sin from that point on? Would pornography on the internet successfully seduce you? Would angry, hateful statements flow from your lips? Would you involve yourself in power struggles or politicking? Would you find yourself envying and coveting? I doubt it. You would want to be as spotless as possible when the Savior appeared and any sin that wiggled its way into your life would immediately be dealt with. And this is the Apostle John’s point when he wrote to believers to remain in vital fellowship with Christ so that at His return no one would be embarrassed by ongoing sinful behavior.

“And now little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that every one also who practices righteousness is born of Him...Every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.? (1 John 2:28, 29; 3:3).

It is obvious that John places responsibility on the believer himself to actively keep sin out of the life. While it is, of course, the powerful blood of Christ that cleanses us from sin, we nevertheless are responsible to deal with sin by keeping it at arms length in our lives. According to John, the coming of Christ will either be a time of “confidence” or “shame” for us and this reality is to energize us in our efforts to be pure. The Apostle Peter has the same emphasis.

“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.” (2 Peter 3:11, 14).

So if Christians are not anticipating the Lord’s return and of their subsequent appearance before Him, are they not deprived of one great spiritual reality in fighting against the flesh and sin? And is not that the very thing that we see reflected today?

“Scandalous behavior is rapidly destroying American Christianity. By their daily activity, most ‘Christians’ regularly commit treason. With their mouths they claim that Jesus is Lord, but with their actions they demonstrate allegiance to money, sex and self-fulfillment.”³

This article goes on to document that the rate of divorce, involvement in pornography, attitudes towards money, cohabitation with a member of the opposite sex, racism and a number of other vital issues reveal almost no difference between believers and the non-christian. Apparently these believers are giving little serious thought to seeing Christ and living in light of that event. Biblical prophecy understood and embraced can provide needed resolve and empowerment in dealing with sin and the flesh.

(2) BIBLICAL PROPHECY REMINDS US THAT WE WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF OUR LIVES AND WILL THEN GAIN OR LOSE REWARD AS A RESULT OF HOW WE LIVED.

Believers, along with all other creatures, must give an account to the Lord God. Salvation does not remove the believer from being accountable to the Lord. Many in the church correctly place emphasis on the believer’s secure position when they place their faith in Christ alone, but then fail to balance this with the truth that our faithful works for Christ are significant in determining the kind of life we will have in the coming Kingdom.

The Scriptures inform us that believers will be dealt with first and then unbelievers. (cf. 1 Peter 4:17; Luke 19:15-27). The salvation of the believer is not the issue at this Judgment Seat of Christ, but rather it is

the believer's works that will be evaluated. And this evaluation by the Lord Jesus will result in the receiving of rewards or the losing of them.

“...it is still possible for them to feel shame in the presence of Christ, and particularly at His Judgment Seat. There is nothing strange about this. Even though eternal salvation is an entirely free gift which can never be lost, the New Testament makes plain that the believer must give an account of his or her Christian life in the presence of Christ...this judgment is not merely a review of our good deeds, but a comprehensive review that embraces both ‘good and bad’...”⁴

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

“If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so through fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:14-15)

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize. Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.” (1 Cor. 9:24)

The idea that all believers will be the same in the future is simply false and contrary to the consistent teachings of the Bible.⁵ Such a view does not deal adequately with the many warnings given to unfaithful believers about negatives they face when appearing before Christ.

No wise parent treats rebellion and obedience in the same way. Suppose that Dad and Mom left for a weekend getaway and gave careful instructions to their two teenage sons. Each was given three specific tasks that were to be finished by the time their parents returned on Sunday afternoon. Now the younger son got up at a reasonable time on Saturday morning and finished all his work by early afternoon, doing a very good job. The older son slept in and put off doing any work, choosing instead to go out and have fun with his friends. By Sunday afternoon he had completed none of his three tasks. When their parents returned home, Dad correctly appraised the situation. He rounded up his two boys and congratulated the younger son for a job well done, and then reached into his wallet and unexpectedly gave him a \$50 bill. The older son now regreted his disobedience and poor use of time. The father looked unhappily at his older boy, rebuked him for his disobedience but then reached into his wallet and gave his older son \$50 also. How unreal! No good father would ever do that, rewarding good behavior and bad behavior in the same way. And yet that seems to be the prevailing opinion in the church regarding the way in which our Heavenly Father will deal with His children.

The Word of God teaches that there are rewards that will be received because of faithful service of Christ and there are rewards that can be lost by unfaithfulness (cf. 1 Cor. 3:15; 2 John 8; Col. 3:23-25). The faithful believer will be given “crowns” (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Peter 5:3); receive that desired commendation of “well done” by the Lord (Luke 19:17; Matt. 25:21; 23) and be granted a place of ruling alongside Messiah (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Luke 19:17, 19). The believer who is unfaithful to the Lord Jesus will not receive crowns, may well be addressed by Christ as a “worthless slave” (cf. Luke 19:22) and will not reign with Him (cf. 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Luke 19:24-26). Their salvation is secure, but their rewards are not. Believers have a secure inheritance because they are children of God, but there is another aspect of inheritance that depends on being a faithful child of God. This inheritance (not salvation) can be lost. “Simple faith brings assurance of heaven. Persistent faith brings inheritance.”⁶ What we do in this life will have a very real effect on life in the coming kingdom of God. After exhorting believers to be holy as their Heavenly Father is holy, the Apostle Peter states,

“And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth.” (1 Peter 1:17)

One wonders why Peter would exhort us to “fear” if it really does not actually matter what we do or do not do in this life. However, according to the New Testament, the works done by believers are important and do have consequences beyond this life. I doubt that Peter and the other New Testament writers would subscribe to the teaching that all will be the same in the future kingdom of God.

The knowledge of a coming time of accountability and rewarding can have a profound impact on the way believers live today. But without such truth the “one world” view will prevail in the thinking and in the living of Christians.

(3) BIBLICAL PROPHECY PROVIDES A VALUABLE MINDSET IN TIMES OF TRIAL AND TEMPTATION.

The fact that believers are faced with some burdensome and painful trials in this life is not a new revelation. We know that God has not exempted believers from the sudden death of a loved one or the arrival of a debilitating disease or the appearance of great financial loss. And even if such “major tragedies” do not enter the believer’s life, the child of God still experiences scores of “minor” pressures, griefs, disappointments and setbacks.

James, and others, observed that believers can respond well or they can respond poorly to these painful times in life. In order for trials to be successfully endured, James says that the believer must possess

God's wisdom, which is seeing life from God's perspective. An integral part of God's perspective is the future that lies ahead. This is how Jesus faced the trial of His crucifixion. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus "for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:2). Jesus looked beyond those six hours on the cross to that time in His glorious kingdom when He would be with those that He would redeem and restore.

The believer who is focused on this world will likely not do well in trials when things go terribly wrong in this world. Without a working knowledge of things to come, he will have to fall back on the "stiff upper lip" approach or to wishful thinking. But the believer who anticipates the glorious age to come will be better positioned to deal well with the pain and disappointments that accompany trials in this world.

After speaking about the universality of trials and the need for God's wisdom, James references the future (James 1:12). The "crown of life", also mentioned in Revelation 2:10, does seem to focus on the future reward given to the believer who loves the Lord so much that he does not resent what the Lord has allowed into his life. An incentive for enduring in trials is the understanding that there is future reward for the enduring believer.

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)

As James' letter comes to a close, the author returns to the matter of the trials of life and the need to patiently endure like Job and the prophets of old. And here James again appeals to the future to give strength to his friends.

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord....You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door." (James 5:7-9)

And Peter gives the same kind of encouragement.

"In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7)

What believers need in times of trial is not positive thinking, but prophetic thinking.

(4) BIBLICAL PROPHECY GIVES PROTECTION TO BELIEVERS FROM FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR FALSE TEACHING.

Sometimes when we view certain religious teachers on television, we wonder what attracts people to them and their teachings. Their messages are devoid of any real biblical substance and yet their followers seem to hang on every superficial word uttered. This religious “happy hour” seems to draw many sane and sensible people but nevertheless they appear mesmerized by the goings on. What is the magnet that draws people to these teachers?

False teaching characteristically has a “one world” focus and a person who is not indoctrinated with a “two world” perspective will easily fall prey to this kind of false teaching. The Apostles warned us that the basic element in much of false teaching is “lust”. Lust (*epiyumia*) does not, as some think, simply refer to immorality. While immorality is included, the word rather refers to wrong desires of any kind.⁷ God, of course, has given us many desires and these are legitimate and normal. But these desires are elevated by false teachers to *a place of lordship* in peoples’ lives. So health, personal comfort, wealth, enjoyment in life, good kids and a good marriage, positions of prominence, material possessions and a host of other desires become the focus of life. These all can have legitimacy in their rightful place (cf. 1 Tim. 4:4-5) but in false teaching they become the “lords of life”.

This focus on the “good life” in this present world is the reason for the immense popularity of false teachers. They appeal to the natural desires that people have and inform their followers that God is quite happy when they pursue these things in this world. This “one world view” teaches that the most important life is right now. According to the Apostles, “lust” is the common element in the teachings of these teachers who themselves love money, pleasure and personal comfort (2 Tim.3:2-4).

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires (“lust”, *epiyumia*); and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.” (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

“And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned....For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires (“lust”, *epiyumia*), by sensuality....Knowing this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts” (2 Peter 2:2, 18: 3:3)

“These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.” (Jude 1:18)

When the Apostles spoke against these teachings that promote and encourage “lust” (wrong desire), they at the same time looked ahead to

future events. Peter spoke of the coming day of the Lord, of the certainty of future judgment and of the wonderful world to come (2 Peter 2:9, 17: 3:7, 10-13). Jude also spoke of the sure judgment to come, using examples of past judgments (Jude 1:4-7, 15). And Paul reminded Timothy that God will judge these false teachers at Christ's return and will also reward those who have been faithful to the Word and stayed away from false teaching (2 Tim. 4:1, 8).

It seems clear that if a believer consciously lives day by day reflecting on the Lord's return, the Judgment Seat of Christ and the glorious coming kingdom that this believer will not be drawn into the one world view and the "lusts" of false teaching. But if the believer is not informed by these truths of the future, then he will be far more susceptible to such things. It is much easier to say "no" to yourself when you are looking for something that is far superior. Is that not what Hebrews 11 is promoting?

(5) BIBLICAL PROPHECY PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR A BELIEVER TO PRIORITIZE LIFE BETTER AND MAKE BETTER DECISIONS.

Everyone knows that if a person had knowledge of future events, then better decisions would be made. For example, would Fred take a job next week with the ABC Company if he knew that in four months the ABC Company would be going bankrupt? Would the Jones family buy that house down by the river if they knew that next spring the "flood of the century" would wash away all dwellings by that river? Or would the remodeling of an old home be the priority in the lives of Bill and Sue if they knew that it would burn to the ground as soon as it was completed? Knowledge of the future would, in these cases, undoubtedly reshape decisions and priorities.

Bible prophecy can play such a life changing role today. When believers become convinced of the truthfulness of these prophetic portions dealing with our accountability and reward, they will prioritize life differently, make better decisions and order their lives in a much more biblical way. The reality of future things sheds significant light on the important issues of life and gives us a framework for evaluating what is most important. Those who live with an awareness of what lies ahead in the plan of God think differently regarding the use of their time, money and resources. The goals and purposes of life are altered by a conviction about future realities. Again, note the Apostle Peter's exhortation when he says "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" in view of future events (2 Peter 3:11).

After Jesus gave His powerful prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives (cf. Matt. 24-25), He then gave six parables which emphasized three things. He said that in light of these coming events, His followers were to: (1) be watching expectantly for His return, (2) be prepared spiritually for His arrival, and (3) be faithfully serving Him until He

returned. What His servants do is of great importance to Him and He advised them to order their lives according to the prophetic truths He had just revealed. And these three attitudes are exactly what biblical prophecy is designed to produce in the day by day living of God's people.

(6) BIBLICAL PROPHECY REVEALS THE END OF EVIL AND OF THE UNBELIEVER.

The problem of the presence and apparent success of evil has been a thorny theological and philosophical problem for all of man's history. Biblical prophecy does not deal with the origin of evil but it does deal with the end of evil. Wickedness will not prevail and evil people will be punished and will not "get away with murder." It is clear that evil and evildoers will be removed from life that will be lived forever in God's forever kingdom.

"But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." (2 Peter 3:13)

"...and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21:27)

"And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Rev. 20:11)

As the Scriptures describe the fate of the unbeliever, it is a terrible fate that they face. As we contemplate the eternal end of the unbeliever, it is not good that we become satisfied with our wonderful futures but that we are motivated by biblical prophecy to share the good news with those whose futures are horrible.

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels....and these will go away into eternal punishment...' (Matt. 25:41, 48)

The Apostle Paul graphically adds to this statement by Jesus.

"...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." (2 Thes. 1:7-9)

Paul's prophetic word on the fate of unbelievers is terrifying. They not only will be sent into eternal fire, but their lives will be ruined eternally ("eternal destruction"). It is the opposite of that quality of life known commonly as "eternal life." This eliminates anyone having a good

time partying in hell, or any other such nonsense. That which God designed life to be and have by way of meaning and purpose will be gone.

“This banishment from the presence of ‘the Lord’, the glorified Jesus, will be the very essence of eternal punishment. The result will be a negative vacuum for them, depriving them of the Lord’s favor and all which gives meaning and blessedness to life.”⁸

It will be like being eternally depressed, where forever life has no meaning to it. And furthermore, they will be “away from the presence of the Lord.” Today even the wicked are recipients of God’s common grace and are therefore blessed. But in the lake of fire there appears to be a complete separation from any of God’s grace and mercy. Can anything be more terrible than what Paul describes in these verses? These forceful statements about the fate of the unbeliever ought to resonate in the hearts of believers causing us to be more active in giving out the good news that there is a powerful Savior who can deliver from the wrath of God to come.

Believers who are armed with this prophetic knowledge will be encouraged by the demise of evil even though according to what is heard daily on the news, evil is winning the day. In the world to come it is righteousness that reigns supreme.

(7) BIBLICAL PROPHECY PROVIDES HOPE WHICH IS A KEY ELEMENT IN ESTABLISHING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW.

If there is anyone who ought to live in this world with confidence, it is the child of God (cf. Titus 2:13). If there is anyone who ought not live under the load of defeat, fear and depression, it is the child of God. While none of us are exempt from painful situations in life, we should not live hopeless, negative, defeated lives because we understand where all of life is headed and that we have an amazing future that is ours as believers. “Let us rejoice and be glad” (Rev. 19:7) will be the prevailing sentiment for the redeemed.

This attitude of hope is not wishful thinking because it is grounded in the commitment of God to restore what was lost in the Garden of Eden. Man’s wilfull disobedience brought about the loss of paradise, of fellowship with God and of the privileged position of ruling the earth. At that moment in time, God could have wiped everything out and started over again. (After all, what would He have lost but two people and six days of work!). But instead He promised that there would be restoration and reconciliation through the “seed of the woman.” And at that time He embarked on the path that would bring about the restoration of all things that had been lost. He chose to do this through the nation of Israel with whom He would later enter into a binding covenant agreement.

When we turn to Revelation 20-22 we discover that those three things that were lost will be fully regained because of the Cross and the powerful working of our Creator God. Unhindered fellowship with God, a wonderful paradise and the opportunity of ruling with Messiah will again be the experience of people. Biblical prophecy lets us in on this marvelous ending and gives us the confident expectation which assists us in living well for Christ right now. Biblical prophecy provides us with a clear, comprehensive worldview which in turn generates biblical hope because we are dealing with a God who is faithful to His promises.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When we thoughtfully consider the way in which biblical prophecy was used by Jesus Christ and His apostles, it is apparent that this was not a peripheral area of theology to them. They saw that these truths are powerful helps and motivators which provide needed wisdom and strength to live godly in Christ Jesus. The woman who did not like prophetic messages because they did not help her live her Christian life simply had it all wrong. The pastor who did not preach the prophecies of the Bible because they tended to be obscure and controversial deprived his flock of the very truths needed to run this marathon known as the Christian life.

Does this doctrine of eschatology make any practical difference to believers today? If biblical prophecy is expounded clearly and correctly and is embraced as true by believers, it will have profound effects on the way believers live their lives. And it will go a long way in correcting the damaging “one world” view that is entrenched in many churches.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1952), 118.

² This article can be found at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2005/001/3.8.html>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John* (Irving: GTS, 1999), 125.

⁵ Paul Benware, *The Believer's Payday* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2002), 21-56.

⁶ Michael Eaton, *No Condemnation: A New Theology of Assurance* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1995), 181. In a thought provoking study, Eaton believes that both Calvinism and Arminianism are too rigid in their concept of “inheritance.” He observes that in both the Old and New Testament, inheritance is seen as a reward for obedience and that inheritance does not come by initial faith alone but by persistence in faith. I would agree with much that he has to say and argue that passages like Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:5, 1 Cor. 6:9 which speak of the loss of an inheritance in God's kingdom is written to believers but is not referencing the loss of salvation, but rather the loss of reward. While many would say this is a warning to the “professed believer”, the passages themselves were written to believers and there is not a professed believer in sight. See also, Paul Benware, *The Believer's Payday*, 22-40.

⁷ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), I. 290-291. Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1952), 293.

⁸ D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Thesslonian Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Publishing, 1971), 292.

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