

# Understanding prophecy is still important

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Have you ever found yourself thinking of good interpretations about prophecy but nobody is interested in your opinions?

You can tell people about the abomination that makes desolate. You can reveal to people who the beast is. And you can identify the mark of the beast. Yet no one seems interested.

Maybe there was a time when you wanted to exalt yourself by attempting to show people how much you knew. But that's changed.

Paul wrote that, if he understood prophecy, mysteries and knowledge but did not have love, he was nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2).

Now, of course, you really only want to help people.

So is there any value in studying prophecy, even when nobody wants to hear your interpretations?

The greatest value in studying prophecy remains personal repentance.

In this article I want to encourage people to allow their study of prophecy to help them examine their personal goals in four broad areas.

## **Remember your Creator**

The first area is our personal relationship with God. Obviously, this subject is the most important, and it permeates the other three.

When Jesus told a scribe that we should love God with our whole being and we should love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:28-31), the scribe realized that this teaching was more important than the sacrificial system that was still in place (verses 32-33).

Upon seeing the scribe's analysis, Jesus commented: "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."

If we want to be close to the Kingdom of God, it is important for God to be at the center of our lives.

Does our life revolve around Him?

Do we accept His grace?

Do we make a commitment to attain His expectations of us?

### **Your family**

The second area is our family. Our relationship with God should help our family life.

When Jesus established a criterion for being His disciple (Luke 14:26-33), He said that a believer must not put his family ahead of Christ.

Do you know what that tells us? Family should be the second-most-important thing in our life, behind our personal relationship with God.

For the record, we acknowledge that Jesus taught that family can sometimes be an obstacle to a believer (Matthew 10:35-36).

But Peter later gave us some good advice about potential family difficulties.

In 1 Peter 4:15 he wrote that we should *not* suffer for our decisions.

In verse 16 he wrote that there is no shame in suffering for Christ.

How does this apply to family?

If our bad decisions with family cause suffering for us, shame on us for our bad decisions. However, if a proper response to God causes problems with our family, let us not be ashamed.

What are your specific goals toward your family?

### **Your employment**

The third area is our employment. Our relationship with God should help our employment environment.

Again, 1 Peter 4:15-16 can apply.

If our bad decisions with employment cause suffering for us, shame on us for our bad decisions.

However, if a proper response to God causes problems with our employment, let us not be ashamed.

In 1 Timothy 2:1-2 Paul wrote that a believer should pray for his supervisors. Can you determine why?

Of course, it would be proper to pray for the good of the supervisor. But verse 2 also shows us that it is okay to pray for the supervisor so we may realize tangible benefits of peace and of freedom to obey God.

What are your specific goals toward your employment?

## Your congregation

The fourth area is our congregation. Our relationship with God should help our involvement in our congregation.

For the record, some people mistakenly confuse activity within a congregation as being the same as their personal relationship with God.

Someone could ask: What's wrong with that?

My response: By involvement in their congregation, too many people put religious activities ahead of their family and their employment.

Have you noticed the strong words in 1 Timothy 5:8 that Paul used about a person who did not take care of his family? He said: "He has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

Singing in the choir, running the sound system, writing religious articles or giving sermons is not more important than taking care of the family.

Sending money to a church to sponsor religious projects (like magazines and television shows) is not more important than taking care of the family.

In fact, Jesus was direct in His criticism of elders who taught this heresy. Jesus corrected the elders who taught the people to support the temple (the church) instead of supporting their parents (Mark 7:9-13). Obviously, personally obeying the Fifth Commandment is much more important than financially supporting the service projects of a church.

Don't get me wrong. Serving in a congregation is a good goal. It's just not as important as the first three we mentioned.

Now that we have correctly placed the congregation in the order of importance, what are your specific goals for serving your congregation?

## Realistic response

Understanding prophecy is important. Jesus warned us not to let the events of prophecy come upon us unawares (Luke 21:34-35). He instructed us to draw closer to God (verse 36).

Is your study of prophecy helping you to establish specific goals that please God?

Is your study of prophecy influencing you to reach those goals?