

Thursday Evening Bible Study

Series: the End Times – Bible prophecy about future events and periods

Teaching Summary for Week 5

New Material this week:

Biblical Prophecy: Overview.

Handout: “**Interpreting Biblical Prophecy**” – finishing up

.

The field of **Old Testament prophecy** is the most extensive and arguably the most important area in the entire study of **the future Mediatorial Kingdom**.

The Nature of Kingdom Prophecy

1. **Prophecy and History:** From one standpoint, prophecy arises out of the definition historical situation that faced the prophet. The prophet knew the times he was in and the people to whom he was sent by God to speak.
 - a. When the prophet spoke of the **future coming Kingdom**, he never divorced it from the **kingdom of history**.
 - b. Example: **the book of Daniel**. The glories of the future Kingdom are set in contrast to the historical darkness of the Jewish captivity in Babylon. The **future** chronology of **seventy weeks of years** which ends with the future Messianic Kingdom (**Daniel 9:24**) follows in that same chapter a reference to an **historic** period of **seventy years** predicted by Jeremiah to be the length of the captivity the end of which Daniel now found himself (**Daniel 9:1-2**).
 - c. There is no such thing as Biblical prophecy totally unrelated to history.

2. **Prophecy and Time Perspective:** Some prophecies of the Kingdom have what is called a “double reference”, but it’s more accurate to see them as having a **telescopic** feature.
- a. Prophecy sees **together** what history unfolds as **separate**.
 - b. Prophecy sees **the climactic end** as being **close behind** the **nearest-coming** historical event.
 - c. Prophecy often **lacks the dimension of time**. Events appear **together** on the screen of prophecy which in their fulfillment may be **widely separated in time**.
 - d. A student may find a prophecy that has literary unity but refers to one event in the near future connected with the **historic kingdom** and also to some far-off event connected with **the Messiah and His Millennial Kingdom**.
 - e. When the first event arrives, it serves as a “down payment” that secures **the sure hope** that the distant and final event will also occur.
 - f. An excellent example is found in **Isaiah 13:17 – 14:4**.
 - i. The prediction begins with the defeat of Babylon by the Medes, and moves immediately to a Babylon of the end-time, in the day when Israel is finally delivered.
 - ii. The first event soon became a fact in ancient history.
 - iii. The latter even is even today a future event
 - g. Although certain areas of the future are definitely clocked as to time sequence and extent, we find in **Old Testament** prophecy **no absolutely continuous and unbroken chronology of the future**.
 - h. Prophets saw **together** on the screen of revelation events which in their fulfillment would be **separated by centuries** of time.
 - i. Therefore it is a big **mistake** to try to fit the events of Old Testament prophecy into a rigid mold of **unbroken time**.
 - i. Examples: **Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 61:1-3**.
 - j. Sometimes the prophets actually appear to **reverse the order** of events in their vision of the future!
 - i. Example: **Isaiah 65:17-25**.

The Kingdom and the Covenants

Resources:

1. Alva McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God. BMH Books, 2012. (originally published in 1959).
2. J. Dwight Pentecost, **Thy Kingdom Come: Tracing God's Kingdom Program and Covenant Promises throughout History**. Kregel Publications, 1995.
3. J. Dwight Pentecost, **Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology**. Zondervan, 1964.

Part 1. Covenants: an introduction

Definition of a covenant: A **divine covenant** is :

(1) a **sovereign decree** of God, whereby He establishes an unconditional compact with man, obligating Himself, in grace, with the declaration **"I WILL"**, to bring to pass definite blessings for the covenanted ones, OR

(2) a **proposal** of God, wherein He promises, in a conditional or mutual compact with man, by the contingent formula **"IF YOU WILL"**, to grant special blessings to man provided he fulfills perfectly certain conditions, and to execute definite punishment in case of his failure.

[from Pentecost, Things to Come, pages 67-68 , quoting Charles Lincoln]

There are two kinds of covenants:

UNCONDITIONAL = fulfillment depends on the one making the covenant alone – **the LORD**. It depends therefore upon the authority and integrity of the LORD apart from any merit or response of the recipient.

CONDITIONAL = fulfillment depends on the recipient of the covenant – **Israel**.

God has made 5 major covenants with men (Israel):

- 1. The Abrahamic Covenant (UNCONDITIONAL)**
- 2. The Palestinian Covenant (UNCONDITIONAL)**
- 3. The Davidic Covenant (UNCONDITIONAL)**
4. **The Mosaic Covenant** (*conditional*)
- 5. The New Covenant (UNCONDITIONAL)**

Part 2. The Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant is an unconditional, eternal, literal covenant made by the Lord to Abraham consisting of promises concerning **his seed** (descendants, innumerable, kings, one seed), a **land grant** deeded to the nation that would come from his loins, and the **blessings** that would extend to all the nations of the world ultimately.

Scriptures (read together): **Genesis 12:2-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18; 26:1-5; 29:1-4.**

As we read, let's note the basic **promises**, how they are **enlarged**, and to whom they are **confirmed**. We will answer the following questions:

1. Which **category(ies)** of the promises are included in this passage : **personal, seed (kingly line or nation), land, and/or universal blessings?**
2. Have these promises been **fulfilled yet** ? Partially, completely, or not at all.
3. Does this passage **enlarge** what had earlier been promised?
4. Does this passage **confirm** the covenant ? If so, to whom?
5. Are the promises **literal**?
6. Are the promises **unconditional** for the person or people to whom the covenant has been made?
7. Are the promises **eternal (forever)**, or can they end?