

The Purpose of Prophecy

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As we all know, here we are in the midst of the fall Holy Days and they are very much about prophecy. We know the spring Holy Days are tied to the story of Ancient Israel and their exodus out of Egypt and the core of that is in historical events. Whereas, looking at the fall Holy Days, they are all about prophetic events. They all look forward to the future for things that God will do when He is working with the rest of mankind; so it's very prophecy focused. We all, as human beings, tend to have a fascination with prophecy. That's not only been true in the church of God, that's in the world in general. People always want to get an advanced view of the future. Whether that's going to a psychic to try and foretell the future, or a horoscope, or the writings of Nostradamus, or other individuals who claim they can tell the future. As human beings we just tend to have a fascination with that. Even people in the church of God, who wouldn't go to psychics or anything of that nature will sometimes have a misguided view in how they approach prophecy. It's an approach I like to refer to as the Grays Sports Almanac type of approach to prophecy.

If you are much younger than myself, you might not recognize the reference to Grays Sports Almanac as it actually comes from a movie back in the '80's. If you were around then or have watched some of the older movies, there was a series of movies in the mid to late '80's called *Back To The Future*; the movies were *Back To The Future, 2* and then *3*, in a series. The basic premise of the movie was about a scientist who developed a time machine. He developed an automobile—a DeLorean—and he had what they called a flux capacitor in it. If he got up to eighty-eight miles per hour, it would enable them to travel through time.

In the second installment of the series, one of the characters was a guy named Biff. He is an old man in this part of the movie but he gets hold of the time machine. He also has a book called Grays Sports Almanac, which was basically for the logging of sporting events for multiple decades of time. It logs who wins all the sporting events. So, he uses the time machine, goes back several decades in time, finds himself as a young man and hands off the book. Sure enough, given enough time, young Biff figures out what he's got and thinks, "I can just start betting on all the winning teams and I'll be a millionaire". And he does—he starts betting on all the winning teams and becomes a successful big millionaire and winds up owning the town, because he has this inside into the future. He has a book that will prophesy for him all who are going to be the winning teams.

His whole focus in this is how he can benefit himself for his own selfish concerns. How to get rich and make himself famous and draw attention and praise to himself is his whole entire focus. Very often, when human beings, including us in the church of God, look at the subject of prophecy, the approach tends to lean in this direction. That's not at all the approach that God has and what His purpose for prophecy is.

What I would like to do today is to look at this from a biblical perspective. If you would like a title for the sermon it's:

The Purpose of Prophecy

We are going to look at this through God's eyes and His purpose for why, in His Bible, He spends a lot of time on prophecy; foretelling the future. Even prophecy that has already been fulfilled or prophecy that is still ahead of us; there's a big chunk of the book that is prophetic. God had specific purposes for that, but His view of the subject is very different from how we look at it. For us, it's often about personal gain or personal attention or esteem and that's not His focus at all.

Let's start off looking at this subject from God's point of view and how He look at it. The first point of view we are going to look at is:

1. Prophecy is for God's glory—the glory of God the Father and Jesus Christ—and not for our personal glory or benefit.

Let's look at several examples of this. In John 14 we see an example that focuses on Jesus Christ.

John 14:28 *You have heard Me say to you, I am going away and coming back to you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I am going to the Father, for My Father is greater than I.*

29) *And now I have told you before it comes [in other words, I've prophesied the future, I've told you what's going to happen], that when it does come to pass, you may believe.* (NKJV)

He gives them insight into the future. But it's not for their personal gain or to get rich or to draw attention to themselves. It is so that when it comes to pass, they can see that He really was the Messiah and He really is the Son of God. He really is who He said He was and so they can believe in Him. It's for Christ's glory and the advancement of the plan of salvation. It was not for personal, individual, selfish gain for human beings.

God the Father approaches the subject the same way as well. In fact, as we are going to see, there are several examples in the book of Isaiah where He specifically points out His ability to prophesy the future. To declare the "end from the beginning" and bring it to pass as major evidence that He is the one True God and there are no others like Him. He uses this as the distinguishing characteristic in Isaiah 46:8.

Isaiah 46:8 *Remember this, and show yourselves men; Recall to mind, O you transgressors.*

9) *Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me ...* (NKJV)

What is the evidence that He is God and there is none like Him—He has no equal.

10) *Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall
stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'*
11) *Calling a bird of prey from the east,
The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed, I have spoken it;
I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it. (NKJV)*

He points out His ability to declare “the end from the beginning”. This is the evidence that He is the one True God and He has no equal and there are no others like Him. This uniquely sets Him apart. We will see several scriptures where He makes this point.

Isaiah 44:6 *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; Besides
Me there is no God. (NKJV)*

Notice once again, He’s making the point, “I am unique, I have no equal, there’s no one like Me.” Let’s notice what makes that the case.

7) *And who can proclaim as I do? Then let him declare it and set it in order for
Me, Since I appointed the ancient people.
And the things that are coming and shall come,
Let them show these to them.*
8) *Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?
You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed, there is no other Rock; I know not one.” (NKJV)*

Once again, it is this that uniquely sets Him apart as the one True God and He has no equal because He can declare “the end from the beginning” and He can bring it to pass. He has that ability. It is for His glory, not for ours. Notice this again in Isaiah 48:3.

Isaiah 48:3 *I have declared the former things from the beginning; They went
forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they
came to pass.*
4) *Because I knew that you were obstinate,
And your neck was an iron sinew, And your brow bronze,*
5) *Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass, I
proclaimed it to you,
Lest you should say, 'My idol has done them,
And my carved image and my molded image Have commanded them.' (NKJV)*

It’s His way of proving that the false gods and the other idols and such, are not legitimate. The reason being they can’t foretell this and He can—that sets Him apart. Even using this as a challenge, to challenge false gods. “Show Me your ability to do this.” We see this in Isaiah 41:21.

Isaiah 41:21 *“Present your case,” says the LORD. “Bring forth your strong reasons,” says the King of Jacob.*

*22) Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were,
That we may consider them,
And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. (NKJV)*

In other words, prophesy and tell Me the future, if you are a real god.

*23) Show the things that are to come hereafter,
That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil,
That we may be dismayed and see it together.
24) Indeed, you are nothing,
And your work is nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination. (NKJV)*

It is His way of showing that He is the one True God and this sets Him apart because He can declare “the end from the beginning” and bring His will to pass. When it happens later, He can say, “I told you how this was going to turn out” and it proves for His glory that He is the one True God. He doesn’t proclaim this so we can go around and say:

“We have read the book and know the future, look at me.”

Even in the church of God, I am sure we can all think of individuals in recent decades who proclaim themselves to be one of the two witnesses or they are prophets or apostles or they’re going to train the two witnesses and other various versions of this. They are approach prophecy using the Bible, but what is their focus?

“Look at me, look at me, I am so important. I have the gift of prophecy; you should respect and bow down to me.”

That’s their approach to this and it’s a totally carnal approach because this is not why God gives us prophecy in the Bible. We’re going to see several purposes He has for prophecy as we go through this sermon, but none of them are the exaltation of carnal human beings. That is never the purpose. It’s always for God’s glory and the purposes He is trying to accomplish.

Let’s look now at a negative example of an individual who received a prophecy that even involved himself, but very quickly it went to his head and he turned it into a way for self-aggrandizement. His “Look at me because I’m so important” was the approach he had. We are obviously going to look at the example of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. Before I read a specific portion of this, I just want to summarize the story; I’m sure it’s a familiar one for most of us. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and he saw this big image. He was really shaken by this dream and wanted to know what it was about; it had made a big impression upon him. He sent out an edict in his empire to all the wise men—someone has to interpret the dream for him—but not just interpret, they have to tell him

what he dreamed in the first place. That was his measure that they really knew what they were talking about.

“If you can tell me what the dream was, then tell me the interpretation, then I’ll trust you.”

That was the edict he put out. As you can imagine, a lot of his wisemen were scrambling, trying to do the typical psychic routine where they try to pull information out of you. Then they can then twist it and make it their interpretation and sound like they know what they are doing. Nebuchadnezzar didn’t play along. He was literally getting to the point where he was about to kill them all, before Daniel gave him an answer. Notice when Daniel gave him the answer, Nebuchadnezzar was part of this image. He had not only had a prophecy revealed to him, but he was told that part of it was about him.

Daniel 2:36 *“This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king.*

37) You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory;

38) and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. (NKJV)

He told him that he had had this dream about this image and that he was part of it; it was about him because he was this head of gold. Notice Nebuchadnezzar doesn’t look at this in the context of what Daniel had said to him. Daniel said that there is a great God in heaven and the only reason that you have this empire and the only reason that you have all that you have and are in this powerful position is because He chose to give it to you. He’s revealed this image to you and you are a part of it and He’s given it to you.

He doesn’t look at this humbly and say “I so appreciate that the great God of heaven has given this to me because I didn’t get it on my own and it’s to His glory and not mine”. That’s now how Nebuchadnezzar takes this. You can see this in the very next chapter; he builds a big image. Where did he get that idea from? It doesn’t directly say it but it’s not hard to connect the dots. He had this dream and had this image and was told he was a part of it. In the next chapter he builds this big image and tells the people to bow down to it. So, what is he essentially doing? “This is me, bow down to it”; that’s the underlying message.

Notice in Daniel 3:1.

Daniel 3:1 *Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.*

2) And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the

magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

3) So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4) Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,

5) that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up;

6) and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

7) So, at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. (NKJV)

I'm sure we are familiar with Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego later refusing to go along with this and there was a show down between them and Nebuchadnezzar. Just look at this and follow the thought process that was going on in Nebuchadnezzar's mind to have done this. He has this prophecy revealed to him and not only is God showing him this dream of the future of these empires that will reign throughout time, he is even told through Daniel, "You are this head of gold, this is about you. You're involved in all of this." Again, he doesn't have a humble response of appreciation to this. It's "look at me, look at me, look how important I am, I'm a big shot. This was all about me, everybody now needs to bow down to this image because it is about me." He is essentially, if you follow the thought process, "everybody bow down to me" is kind of what he is getting at here. This is a totally wrong approach to prophecy. It's not just the Gray's Sports Almanac of personal benefit, it's literally self-exaltation of, "Look to me and everybody bow down to me."

I'm sure if you've looked around in the church of God in the last several decades, you would have found individuals who have more of this kind of approach. Those who claim to be prophets, claim to be one of the two witnesses, they are going to train the two witnesses, they have the gift of prophecy and such. Very often you see the approach is, "Look at me, look at me, look at me"—that's their mindset.

Now let's look at an individual whom we know had the gift of prophecy and how he approached it. It's right here in this same book, Daniel 1:17. It tells us something interesting about Daniel himself.

Daniel 1:17 *As for these four young men [referring to Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego as well as Daniel], God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; [notice what it says specifically about Daniel] and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. (NKJV)*

In other words, Daniel had the gift of prophesy. He had the ability to understand and interpret these things and had a very unique gift. If you read through the whole story in Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar put out this challenge to all the supposed wise men of Babylon—you need to not only interpret the dream, you need to tell me what the dream was. Of course, nobody could pull that off, but Daniel did. Let's notice how Daniel approached it. He doesn't walk in there strutting, saying "Hey guys, I have the gift of prophesy, I'll solve this one, I'll tell you all about it, everybody, look at me, I'm a big shot". That is not how he handled it at all.

Daniel 2:24 *Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation."*

25) *Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation."*

26) *The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?"*

27) *Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. (NKJV)*

Notice the next couple of verses. He doesn't turn and say, "They can't tell you, but I'm a big shot; I have a higher IQ than all of them. I'm a smarter, more gifted guy and can tell you all about it." That's not what he says.

28) *But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:*

29) *As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be.*

30) *But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart. (NKJV)*

Notice his whole approach with this is not, "I'm so smart, I have a higher IQ, I'm gifted, I'm God's special man". He doesn't do this for the self-glory. It's, "I don't know this because I'm so smart, it's because there is a God in heaven and He has been kind and merciful and revealed this to us; that's why we know this." He gives all the glory and credit to God and realizes that God has a number of purposes involved in all of this and none of them are the exaltation of Daniel. None of them are for Daniel to stand on a pedestal and say, "Everybody bow down to me, I'm so big and bad and so important". That wasn't the focus at all. It was to the glory to God and to accomplish His overall

purposes. To reveal the future and revealing that He is the one True God and has no equals because He can tell you all these Empires that are going to come to pass over time. It's going to happen just like He said it was and this is going to prove that He is the True God. This is His true Word in this book and it's all for His glory, not for the glory of us physical human beings.

One of the other big purposes of prophecy is:

2. To reveal His will to His servants.

Not for our exaltation but because He loves and cares about us and warns us about future events so we can be prepared to deal with them. Not from a Gray's Sports Almanac point of view where we can place bets and become millionaires, but He is kind and merciful in warning us to be prepared for future events that could come our way. We see this in Amos 3:7.

Amos 3:7 *Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*

8) A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy? (NKJV)

In other words, one of His purposes for this is to give us his servants—those who are trying to obey Him and trying to follow Him—a heads up with what is coming down the plank; of what they could be facing in the future and the ultimate picture of how things end. As we are going to see as we go through this sermon, that's a great source of hope and encouragement for us. To know how the book ends helps us endure and make it into the Kingdom.

To reinforce this point that He reveals prophecy to inform His servants of the future, we will look at Revelation 1:1.

Revelation 1:1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,*

2) who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

3) 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. (NKJV)

One of the reasons He gives us prophesy—especially the book of Revelation—is to reveal to His servants the future. To prepare for what is going to potentially come in our lives, as we look forward into the future. You might say there are two different stories there. Let me explain what I mean by that. There is what you might call the short-term picture and the long-term picture, if we look at this in the terms of the Book of Revelation. One of the things we learn in the book of Revelation, is not only about the millennium and God's ultimate plans for mankind, but also, as Firstfruits it tells us about

the resurrection to eternal life. If we endure to the end and faithfully obey Him, regardless of the trials and tribulations we go through, there is a wonderful future ahead for all of us. To become God beings and to be married to Christ and reign in the Kingdom of God. Mr. Armstrong used to love to joke about it and say, "Brethren, I've looked ahead to the end of the book and we win". That's a great source of encouragement for us.

We have to also realize that there is another side to this picture as well; it's the short-term picture. The book of Revelation also tells us about events that will take place between now and the return of Jesus Christ and that picture is not so encouraging. That's a pretty ugly picture. As we are going to see, it's referred to as "perilous times" that we are going to live in. If we look at that—not referring to the spiritual picture of our salvation—but from a physical or national point of view in terms of the nation that we live in, the United States and the comfort that we are used to and have been enjoying—we look to the end of the book and we lose. Between now and the return of Christ, the picture is kind of ugly. This also gives us a warning of all of that because we have to realize that between now and the return of Christ, we are told in prophesy that we are going to live in perilous times which will be very difficult times to endure through. That ultimate long-term picture of our salvation is the great hope we hold onto to get through it. But we have to navigate very perilous times to get there.

In 2 Timothy 3 you will notice how the end times are described. Times I personally think are coming upon us fairly rapidly.

2 Timothy 3:1 *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:*
2) *For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
3) *unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,*
4) *traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*
5) *having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!* (NKJV)

As you can see, this paints a pretty negative picture of what the world will be like. This is what I would refer to as the short-term picture and is what happens between now and the return of Christ. When you read through these qualities, basically what it's telling us is that we are going to live in a world that is unfortunately oftentimes run by a bunch of sociopaths who are just very evil and are not looking out for your best interest at all. You have to navigate your way through this, depending upon God for guidance to endure through it, knowing this ultimately good picture. If we are faithful to God and trust in His protection, as I like to put it is, the greatest thing we have to fear is not having God on our side. Not obeying Him, where He is protecting us. As long as He is protecting us, we don't need to fear men.

We do live in very perilous times which can put us in positions of, how do we make good decisions to navigate through this. We're going to look at a biblical principle that I

think is the foundation of how we make those kinds of decisions. First of all, to set the stage, I'd like to cover a situation that is rapidly developing. I've been watching something over the past year, not only in the U.S. but in many nations across the world—that is in my view an indication of very perilous times coming upon us. What I'm referring to is, the complete and total abandonment of the Nuremberg Code. Let me give a little history as to where I'm coming from.

I'm sure everyone hearing this is at least relatively familiar with World War II and Nazi Germany and the atrocities they committed. You know how World War II ended; the allied forces eventually liberate Europe and took over, and Germany was conquered. One of the things that happened soon after World War II, the United States carried out what is referred to as the Nuremberg trials, because they took place in a town called Nuremberg, Germany. What they did was put several of the Nazi leaders on trial for the atrocities that they had committed. They went way beyond fighting a war and the normal bloodshed and things that happen in warfare. They set up concentration camps and murdered millions of people and did all sorts of sick things there. One of the things that was included in these trials was the trying a number of Nazi doctors who had taken advantage of the situation in the concentration camps because they realized they had a captive audience. They decided to do medical experiments on all the people in the concentration camps. They did some really sick and twisted things, because they had this captive audience and people who couldn't say no. They didn't have the option of saying, "No, this doesn't sound right to me, I don't want to be a part of this". They were forced to be a part of it. After all this came to light, the world looked at this—particularly the U.S.—and wanted to ensure that this never happened again in world history; that we did not allow history to repeat itself and go back down this road again. They developed what is referred to as the Nuremberg Code. It has been the foundation of medical ethics, particularly as it pertains to medical research.

Just to give you a little bit of my own background on this subject, which will become relevant in a minute. For the past fifteen years, I've worked for a large hospital system, as a recruiter—I'm not a physician or anything—but I have serviced the research institute for this large hospital system. As a result of that, I've had to become very familiar with the basic ethical principles, regulatory issues and such, around medical research. I can tell you the Nuremberg Code, since World War II, has been considered the foundation for medical ethics around medical research. What I would like to do is read point one of the Nuremberg Code and then I'll explain why I'm talking about this.

Quoting directly, I'm going to read point one of the Nuremberg Code.

The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential. This means that the person involved should have the legal capacity to give consent, should be so situated as to be able to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-reaching or other anterior form of constraint or coercion and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved, as to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision. This latter element requires

that before the acceptance of an affirmative decision by the experimental subject, there should be made known to him the nature, duration and purpose of the experiment, the method and means by which it is to be conducted, all inconveniences and hazards reasonably to be expected or effects on his health or person, which may possibly come from this participation in the experiment and the duty and responsibilities for ascertaining the quality of the consent rests upon each individual that initiates, directs or engages in the experiment. It is a personal duty and responsibility which may not be delegated to another with impunity.

As you can see, willful, informed, voluntary consent is an absolutely essential concept to being a human subject in research. This is in federal regulatory standards; this is in internal policies of hospital systems. In fact, the one I just resigned from was violating all of this. This is very well documented. Why do I mention this? Regardless of what your view is of the Covid situation and vaccines and all of that, because there is a lot of personal choice involved, let me just share with you some facts.

These are experimental medications that by definition are part of a clinical trial. Anyone who receives them is a live human test subject participating in research. What that means by definition in terms of federal regulatory standards of the Nuremberg Code, of everything associated with medical ethics, you cannot coerce people through force, to be live human test subjects. But that is something that is just being normalized in our society right now. Federal government is taking part in that, State governments are taking part in that, hospital systems and employers are taking part in that and it's happening not in just the U.S. but across the world. Regardless of what your thoughts are on any particular vaccine or drug, just think this one through. If you normalize the issue of basically taking away informed consent, they can now mandate that you have to receive in your body anything they tell you you have to, and it's an experimental medication. You no longer have the right to say no, or we'll take away your livelihood. We'll destroy your life if you don't submit to this. If you didn't sleep through World History class, you should find that frightening. Because that is an absolutely perilous world, because where does that end? Once you establish that precedence and you go down that road, you've now entered a scary world. You've now thrown away the Nuremberg Code and have a situation where history can repeat itself. This is very perilous to even be going down this road.

What I want you to look at as well is, in navigating decisions of this nature, there is a very basic principle which you need to consider in situations like this. I'll tie this all together in a moment—I want you to see a biblical principle that Jesus Christ gives us for how you navigate difficult decisions. How do you figure out, who should I trust, whose advice should I follow and who should I not? Christ gives us a very clear principle in this regard in Matthew 7:15.

Matthew 7:15 *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*

16) You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

- 17) *Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*
- 18) *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*
- 19) *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*
- 20) *Therefore, by their fruits you will know them. (NKJV)*

So, we know fruits. As I always love to refer to them, they are the biblical criteria for assessment. I came up with that from work. Working as a recruiter for twenty years. my job is always trying to assess who is going to be a good hire and who is not. It's trying to spot the potentially problematic employees and screen them out of the process so you don't make a bad hire and you want to identify the good ones that you want to get on your team. You think, how do you assess this? According to Christ, the biblical criteria for assessments is, "by their fruits you shall know them". What is the definition of fruits? Turn to Galatians 5:19.

- Galatians 5:19** *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,*
- 20) *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,*
 - 21) *envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*
 - 22) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
 - 23) *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (NKJV)*

Notice he defines fruits as fruits of behavior. These are all behavioral character traits that people illustrate in their actions. He says you always want to watch this because this is a big red flag to tell you, who is someone you should listen to and follow and who is someone that you shouldn't? How does this tie in to what I mentioned previously? I gave the example of the complete abandonment of the Nuremberg Code.

As I mentioned, when it comes to medical treatments and whether you want to take a vaccine or not, those are all personal decisions. But let me share with you some of a bigger picture that I personally find very alarming, as someone who has worked for the medical industry for the last fifteen years and specifically with medical research. The very fact that a government or various individuals would support the idea of basically taking away informed consent; of human test subjects to take experimental medications which is very easy to document, of how fundamental this is. If one doesn't bat an eye, it's stepping over boundaries like that—violating ethics of that nature. That's a big red flag; that's, "Houston, we have a problem".

Let me also share with you something else. I briefly mentioned, I recently resigned from a fifteen-year career for a major hospital system. I can tell you, in my resignation letter, I documented all of this—I had to do what I refer to as my Esther 4:13 and 14 duty, in explaining why I was resigning, because I literally attached a copy of the Nuremberg Code to my resignation letter along with a link to the federal regulatory standards for

protection of human test subjects and the company's own internal policy document on informed consent. I talked about the fact that to have a mandate where you are taking away—just throwing informed voluntary consent out entirely—is just a massive ethics violation. In addition to that, the marketing campaign that had been done for most all of this year was basically painting a very one-sided picture of the subject. What I mean by that is, all the rules around any medical treatment, particularly with something experimental, you don't just present what you think are the potential benefits, you also have an ethical duty to lay out for someone the known and potential risks involved. In the interest of informed consent. Again, I'm not trying to tell you what decision you should make, but I'm going to give you informed consent because, in my opinion, the vast majority of the country has been deprived of informed consent.

The CDC—the Center for Disease Control of the U.S.—operates a database that they have done for about thirty years now, called VAERS. It refers to Vaccine Adverse Reporting System. If you go into Google and type in VAERS, you can easily find the site. What it's designed to do is to track adverse events. An adverse event is, you receive a medication and any kind of negative reaction you have to it, that was not what it was intended before, is referred to as an adverse event. That could be anything from, "I took this and it gave me a rash", to, "it made me severely ill and nearly killed me"; it could be anything along that line. This database tracks adverse events for vaccines in America, which is about seventy that are used regularly in the U.S. and goes back for about thirty years. Just to look at proportions, because I think this puts a perspective on everything, and it tracks the total number of adverse events reported throughout all of this—a thirty-year period for every vaccine used in America—43% of all adverse events in the system are just for the Covid vaccines since December. If you look at adverse events, the reaction was so bad the patient needed to be hospitalized and of the total number of those, 42% of all of those, for thirty years for every vaccine in America, are just the covid vaccines since December. If you look at adverse events that resulted in a death, 60% of all of them for this thirty-year period are just the Covid vaccine since December. This is typically not being told to America and all people. Here it is safe and effective. That's the data behind "safe and effective"; think of what you want. That is informed consent.

If you would like an easy snapshot of how to look at data like this, let me give you a website that you can do your own research with. It's openvaers.com/covid-data. The reason I point you there as opposed to the main VAERS website is that they have a search engine on their site—a little complicated to use—whereas if you go to this site, it's updated weekly and it's just a chart that shows you and you can get a snapshot of all the data. You can compare that with what is presented as the potential benefits and you can make an informed decision. What I want you to think about is, if you use Christ's criteria, *by their fruits you shall know them*, if you are dealing with individuals who would completely violate ethics, not tell you the full story, take away your right to make a personal decision, does that sound like good fruits? In my mind, that's, "Houston, we have a problem". Again, you can apply these principles to any subject, it doesn't have to be this particular issue. As we look forward into the future, we know between now and the return of Christ, it's not, "We've looked ahead of the book and we win"—not from a

national or physical perspective— “It’s, we’ve looked ahead to the end of the book and we lose”. From a spiritual perspective, yes, we trust in God and are faithful to Him—it all ends well, we wind up in the Kingdom of God and that’s great. We have to navigate through perilous times and I think that’s an important principle for us to realize.

Another big point of God’s purpose for prophecy is, we often look at prophecy as Gray’s Sports Almanac—a way for our personal benefit.

3. God’s purpose in prophecy is specifically to get people to repent.

It’s a message of repentance, it’s not just our exaltation. It’s, stop sinning and stop disobeying Him. Look at a couple of examples in Jeremiah 25. I want you to notice how it mentions how many times God sends the prophets to Israel and what was the purpose? The purpose was to tell them to repent; stop sinning and stop disobeying Him or otherwise, let me prophecy all the calamity that’s going to happen to you if you don’t stop sinning.

Jeremiah 25:1 *The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon),*
2) *which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying:*
3) *“From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, this is the twenty-third year in which the word of the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you [why is He doing that?], rising early and speaking, but you have not listened. (NKJV)*

In other words, the prophets were coming to tell them to repent and stop sinning and stop disobeying God.

4) *They said,*
Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.
5) *They said,*
Repent now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers forever and ever.
6) *Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you.’*
7) *Yet you have not listened to Me,” says the LORD, “that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.*
8) *Therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Because you have not heard My words,*
9) *behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, ‘says the LORD, ‘and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all around, and will*

utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations.

10) Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.

11) And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

12) Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, 'says the LORD; and I will make it a perpetual desolation.

13) So, I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations.

14) (For many nations and great kings shall be served by them also; and I will repay them according to their deeds and according to the works of their own hands.)'" (NKJV)

Notice the whole purpose for repeatedly sending the prophets is:

"Guys, stop sinning. If you don't stop sinning and rebelling, I'll prophecy for you and it's not going to be pretty. Here's all the ugly things that are going to happen to you as punishment of your sins, if you don't stop this."

This is very often what God's focus is. It's not for us to get rich and to call attention for Himself, it's for us to obey Him and to please Him and have the ultimate outcome that comes from faithfully obeying.

For another example of this look at Jeremiah 44:1.

Jeremiah 44:1 *The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who dwell in the land of Egypt, who dwell at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying,*

2) Thus, says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 'You have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them,

3) because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke Me to anger, in that they went to burn incense and to serve other gods whom they did not know, they nor you nor your fathers.

4) However, I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, "Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!"

5) But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to other gods.

6) So, My fury and My anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as it is this day. ' (NKJV)

The whole purpose of this was the emphasis on, stopping sinning. That was the purpose of sending the prophets and the warning—it was all about getting people to obey God; that was the point. Israel had a pretty poor track record of, when the prophets would come and warn them that if you don't stop sinning, here's what is going to happen. the objective was always to get them to repent but oftentimes they didn't.

Let's look at a more positive example in the book of Jonah. We can see the nation of Nineveh, at least for a period of time, actually responded and was willing to listen and to repent. Jonah 1:1.

Jonah 1:1 *Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2) Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” 3) But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so, he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. (NKJV)*

Jonah was negligent in his duties, but as we know the way the story ends is that Jonah does finally go there because God ups the ante. He has a big fish swallow him and spits Jonah out on the beach and says,

“Let's rethink this. Let me give you another shot.
Go do what I told you to do in the first place.”

Jonah begrudgingly does, but what's interesting is the response of the people in Nineveh.

Jonah 3:1 *Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2) “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” 3) So, Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent. 4) And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5) So, the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6) Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. 7) And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. 8) But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.*

9) *Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?*

10) *Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it. (NKJV)*

His whole purpose was to get them to repent. He didn't just want to beat up on them, He was giving them a fair warning that if you don't change your behavior, I'm going to hold you accountable and it's going to be ugly. The people responded by cleaning up their act which was the whole point in the first place. To understand prophecy, we have to realize that that's often the purpose. It's not for our personal exaltation or for us, again, to have our own Gray's Sports Almanac so we can figure out the future to get rich; it's to encourage us to obey God. That's the whole purpose of it. It is sometimes not just something for us to repent of our sins, but a positive hope for the future, for us to hang onto as a motivator to help us endure through the difficulties of our Christian lives. Look at an example of this in Genesis 12, an example of Abraham and a prophecy that was given to him about his life. We'll see later in the New Testament what it tells us about what a powerful thing this was in his life.

Genesis 12:1 *Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family*

And from your father's house,

To a land that I will show you.

2) *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you*

And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

3) *I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

4) *So, Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.*

5) *Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan.*

So they came to the land of Canaan.

6) *Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.*

7) *Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.*

8) *And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.*

9) *So, Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South. (NKJV)*

He is given this prophecy, then essentially told to pack up his bags and go that way and I'll tell you when to stop. He's also promised, "You are going to have this great reward that is going to come from your obedience." This is obviously something that very much motivated Abraham's behavior in his obedience through all the difficulties and trials in

his life Not only him, but we'll see some of his descendants hanging on to these promises. In Hebrews 11 we'll see this directly stated.

Hebrews 11:8 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

9) *By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;*

10) *for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (NKJV)*

This is an obvious reference to New Jerusalem, but notice it's saying, he is enduring through the difficulties of his life and what is he hanging onto? He's hanging on to a prophecy of the future of what God's going to fulfill and the ultimate, wonderful picture that it paints for him. This is a motivator to help him to be obedient. Pick up in verse 11.

11) *By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.*

12) *Therefore, from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

13) *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

14) *For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. (NKJV)*

In other words, they are hanging on to a prophecy of the future that is motivating and encouraging them through life.

15) *And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.*

16) *But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

17) *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,*

18) *of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"*

19) *concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*

20) *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

21) *By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*

22) *By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones. (NKJV)*

He mentions all of these guys. What was a big motivating factor for them, that helped them to hang on through the difficult times in their life and gave them direction? It was prophecy; it was a prophecy of the future, knowing that God made promises to them that He would faithfully fulfill. Even promises they knew they weren't going to receive in their lifetimes but they knew it was of the Kingdom of God and New Jerusalem, but we are going to hang on and endure and faithfully obey through whatever trials are thrown at us, because of that wonderful picture of the future. That is exactly how we should look at this as well.

Hebrews 12:1 *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

2) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3) For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

4) You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

5) And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

6) For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

7) If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

8) But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

9) Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

10) For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

11) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (NKJV)

What it's telling us here is we should do the same thing that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph did. Look forward to that vision of the future, of prophecy, that wonderful ending of how we know how the book ends and the resurrection and Kingdom of God. Have that be the motivator that gets us through perilous times. That keeps us having hope and encouragement to get through the trials that we face in this life, knowing that if God is for us, no one can be against us. It doesn't matter what trials we may go through in this life, as long as we are pleasing God, the movie is going to end well.

We have some details we can look at that can help us in that encouragement. Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*

14) *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.*

15) *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*

16) *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*

17) *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord.*

18) *Therefore comfort one another with these words. (NKJV)*

We should find these words to be a great source of comfort for us; a positive hope for the future. Whether we live to see the resurrection and be one of those who are alive—whether we fit in that category—or if we're in the grave, pushing up daisies and the resurrection happens and we come back to life, it's still the same, wonderfully positive picture. That's something that we need to look to, particularly in the perilous times that are coming upon us, that we are going to be into in the years ahead. Hanging on to this hope and encouragement, knowing that if we faithfully believe in God, He is going to deliver us and it's all going to end well.

We have to realize, without this vision, without seeing prophecy from this positive perspective, our human tendency is we cast off restraint; in other words, we get discouraged, we get distracted and obedience becomes not so important to us. To notice that, turn to our final scripture Proverbs 29:18.

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law. (NKJV)*

I want to read to you, the first half of this verse from the Complete Jewish Bible because I think it makes it a little more clearly.

Proverbs 29:18 *Without a prophetic vision, the people throw off restraint. (CJB)*

It's not just saying, do you have a picture of your future or plan of where you're going with your life it's specifically saying, without prophetic vision the people cast off restraint—they are less obedient. Let me read to you the definition of the Hebrew word that's translated as *vision* in the New King James or *prophetic vision* in the Complete Jewish Bible. It's transliterated into English as *Chazon*, Strong's #2377 and according to The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament by Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, here's how it's defined:

“A masculine noun meaning a revelation; by means of a vision, an oracle, a divine communication; the primary essence of this word is not so much the vision

or the dream itself as the message conveyed, it signifies the direct, specific communication through God and people through the prophetic office or the collection of such messages.”

In other words, our Bible is a collection of such messages—prophetic messages. It's telling us the importance of prophecy in our lives. Again, not from a personal exaltation, not being Gray's Sports Almanac and something to help us get rich and draw attention to ourselves, but to give us not only the warning of what God will do if we disobey Him. It holds us accountable and can bring a punishment of sins upon us, but can also be a great source of encouragement and a hope to hang on to. We know that if we endure all the difficult trials in our lives, if we endure through the perilous times ahead, that we have the Kingdom of God to look forward to. We have the resurrection, reigning with Christ, being totally free of all the evils and limitations of the physical life—we have all of that ahead of us and that's something we should hang on to. If we don't, what happens with our natural inclinations as carnal human beings? If we aren't hanging on to that what do we do? We cast off restraint. We stop retraining ourselves and fighting to overcome our sins and diligently obey God; it's the natural human tendency. That's one of the great purposes of prophecy, to give us that positive picture and encouragement of hope for the future.

As we go forward from this Sabbath, from the time you are hearing this message, the Feast of Tabernacles is just days away, so let's go looking into this with this picture of an accurate view of prophecy. Its purpose is not for our personal exaltation, it's not to draw attention to ourselves or for our personal benefit, it's to motivate us to obey God and to want to avoid the punishments of sin so that we stay in line with Him. We have this great encouragement in our lives of the positive future and the wonderful plan that He has for us. It motivates us to continue to obey Him. As we go forward in these fall Holy Days, let's learn these lessons and hang on to this hope, knowing that if we hang on to these prophecies as a motivator for us, we can successfully make it into the Kingdom of God.