

Bible Prophecy 101 : More Resources

DANGERS IN THE LAST DAYS (from 2 Timothy 3:2-9)

In his second letter to his disciple, Timothy, Paul tells the young pastor that in the last days “there will be very difficult times” (3:1). He then lists several characteristics of ungodly people that will be amplified during these times.

- People will love only themselves and their money (3:2)
- People will be boastful and proud (3:2)
- People will scoff at God (3:2)
- People will be disobedient to their parents (3:2)
- People will be ungrateful (3:2)
- People will consider nothing sacred (3:3)
- People will be unloving and unforgiving (3:3)
- People will slander others (3:3)
- People will have no self-control (3:3)
- People will be cruel (3:3)
- People will have no interest in what is good (3:3)
- People will betray their friends (3:4)
- People will be reckless (3:4)
- People will be puffed up with pride (3:4)
- People will love pleasure rather than God (3:4)
- People will act as if they are religious (3:5)
- People will reject the power that could make them godly (3:5)

Paul warns us to stay away from these kind of people (3:5), and then he warns us about people who display a “counterfeit” faith (3:8). Here’s what they will do:

Work their way into people’s homes and win the confidence of vulnerable women who are burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by many desires (3:6)

Fight the truth because their minds are depraved and their faith is counterfeit (3:7)

The good news is that these people won’t get away with their behavior for long. “Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are,” Paul writes (3:9).

HOW SHOULD WE LIVE IN THE LAST DAYS?

Paul offers advice in several of his letters (from the Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts and Maps):

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Application</i>
Romans 13:11-14	Keep close to the Lord
2 Corinthians 11:13-15	Avoid masquerading as servants of God
Ephesians 5:11	Have nothing to do with evildoers and their wicked deeds; instead, expose them. Believers need not allow evil to continue unchecked, but should actively work against it.
Ephesians 5:18	Redeem the time
Colossians 4:2,5	Believers are to pray, be watchful, be thankful, and be wise in the way they act toward unbelievers, making the most of every opportunity to share the gospel.
2 Thessalonians 3:6-15	Church members who are lazy and idle must be warned. Christians should not be sitting around waiting for the Lord to Return, but should continue working in the ministry.

CHRISTIANS SHOULD EXPECT PERSECUTION

Both Jesus and Paul said that the followers of Christ would experience persecution, so we should not be surprised when it happens:

Jesus predicted persecution:	Matthew 5:11-12 Matthew 10:17-23 Matthew 24:9-11 Mark 8:34 Mark 13:9-13 John 15:18-19:21 John 16:33 John 17:14-15
Paul said to expect persecution	Romans 8:17 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 Philippians 1:29 1 Thessalonians 3:4

WHAT HAS GOD PROMISED US IN HEAVEN?

The apostle Paul gives us several clues as to what we can expect when we are with Jesus for eternity:

- Each person will be rewarded according to what he or she has done (Matthew 16:24-27)
- If we give up material rewards on earth for Christ, we are promised a hundred times as much and eternal life with Christ (Matthew 19:28-30)
- If we die with Christ, we will also live with him (Romans 6:8)
- As children of God, we are also His heirs—and co-heirs with Christ—of all the riches of glory (Romans 8:17)
- At the sounding of the last trumpet, we will be changed and will receive imperishable bodies (1 Corinthians 15:42-58)
- When Christ returns, the dead in Christ will rise first, and then those who are alive will be caught up to meet him in the clouds. Then we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- Christ will give all who overcome the right to sit with Him on His throne in heaven (Revelation 3:21)
- There will be a new heaven and a new earth, with no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, for the old world and its evils will be gone forever (Revelation 21:3-4)

FOUR MAIN APPROACHES TO INTERPRETING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Since the first century, four main approaches have been proposed for interpreting the book of Revelation. Each view has its supporters, but no one view is entirely correct. Neither is one view entirely wrong. Indeed, all four views can provide a valuable framework for studying this difficult and often mysterious book. As with all Bible study, the important thing to keep in mind is whether or not a particular approach brings us closer to the person of Christ.

1. **Preterist View** – Holds that John wrote Revelation to encourage Christians in his own day who were experiencing persecution from the Roman empire. The challenge with this approach is apply John's encouragement to believers living after the Roman empire was no longer a threat. The downside of this view is that it doesn't allow for a future application.
2. **Futurist View** – This view holds that except for the first three chapters of Revelation, John is describing events that will occur at the end of history. The challenge of his view is to see in contemporary events many of the characteristics John describes and to realize that the end could come at any time. We need to be careful not to assume that we have "figured out" the future, since even Jesus said that no one knows the day or the hour of His return.
3. **Historicist View** – Holds that the book of Revelation is a presentation of history from John's day until the second coming and beyond. The challenge with this view is to be aware of the consistency of human evil throughout history and recognize that names may change but the rebellion against God has not. We need to be careful about trying to identify current events or leaders as fulfilling certain aspects of Revelation.
4. **Idealist View** – This view holds that the book of Revelation is symbolic, representing the continual struggle of good and evil. The challenge of this view is that it doesn't necessarily prepare for the future, and in doing so encourage a life of obedience to Christ. We shouldn't avoid Revelation because it's difficult. Rather we should do our best to understand it within its broader literary context.

The summary of these four views was adapted from the Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts and Maps.

THE VALUE OF PREDICTIVE PROPHECY

Not all prophecy involves prediction, or *foretelling*. Much of what the Bible prophets said was *forthtelling* for the purpose of bringing God's people back into a proper relationship with God. So what is the main value of predictive prophecy? It is to instill a hunger for holiness in all who hear it. As one writer put it: "The object of prophecy is not to excite surprise but to stimulate enterprise. The apostle Peter put it this way: "Turn away from evil and do good. Work hard at living in peace with others" (2 Peter 3:11).

OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD TO HELL

Someone once said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. The great 20th century Bible teacher R.A. Torrey had another perspective. He said the road to hell is filled with obstacles. His point was that no one is on the expressway to hell with no possibility of exit. Everyone has a chance to repent and turn to God, thereby inheriting eternal life. The Bible confirms this when it says: "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent" (2 Peter 3:9).

Here are Torrey's six obstacles to hell:

1. **The Bible** – Torrey wrote: "You cannot get very far in the path of sin without finding the Bible in your way." The Bible is one of the greatest hindrances to sin in the world. There are warnings to stay away from sin and invitations to trust Christ for forgiveness of sins.
2. **Prayer** – Torrey is very fond of the prayers of a mother, but really, any prayer offered on behalf of someone on the road to hell has a great deal of power.
3. **Preaching** – Another obstacle on the road to hell is the preaching of pastors and Bible teachers. "How many thousands of people are turned back from sin to God by sermons that they hear or read," writes Torrey. "Sometimes the sermon does its work years later."
4. **Kindness** – You never know when the kind and thoughtful act of a Christ follower will have a great impact on someone on the road to hell. "Oh, let us go as the missionaries of God's grace and block the path of sinful men and women with kind deeds and turn them to righteousness and to God."
5. **The Holy Spirit** – This is one of the greatest hindrances to people going to hell. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, which leads to repentance.
6. **The Cross** – This obstacle is more of a blockade to the road to hell. "No one can get very far down the path of sin and ruin before they see the cross looming before them."

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ITSELF

Isaiah 55:11	God's word will not return to Him empty, but will do what God desires and achieve the purpose for which He sent it.
Jeremiah 23:29	God's word is like fire, and like a hammer that can break a rock into pieces.
John 6:63	God's word is spirit and life.
Acts 7:38	God's word is living.
Ephesians 6:17	God's word is part of the believer's armor: the sword of the Spirit.
Hebrews 4:12	God's word is living and enduring; through it people are born again.
Revelation 1:16; 2:12	God's word is a double-edged sword, coming from His mouth.

VIEWS OF THE ANTICHRIST

Not everyone sees the Antichrist in the same way. The view of the Antichrist varies, depending on the end times viewpoint. Realistically, the truth regarding the Antichrist (and most other prophetic events and personalities) won't be known until it actually happens! In the meantime, we can speculate, but we shouldn't get so entrenched in one particular belief that we are blinded to our real responsibility—to watch and pray until Christ returns.

Here are four different perspectives from four different end times viewpoints as listed in the Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps:

Early Christian Interpreters	Early Christians thought the Antichrist would be someone who would exalt himself as God.
Postmillennialists and Amillennialists	Most in these camps believe the Antichrist will not be a person, but an evil system. They point to Scripture speaking of "many antichrists" (1 John 2:18), which they say alludes to the anti-Christian forces that have persecuted the church throughout history.
Dispensationalists	This is the most commonly held view. Dispensationalists believe that the Antichrist will emerge as the leader of the restored Roman Empire. He will make commitments to Israel and will then be assassinated and restored to life. According to this view, the Anti-Christ will exalt himself in the rebuilt Temple at Jerusalem and begin to persecute Jews. This will cause Israel to turn to the Messiah. The time of great tribulation will end with military Forces converging on Israel

	to defeat the Antichrist.
Historic Premillennialists and Amillennialists	People who hold these views believe that the Antichrist will be a powerful individual, but they do not believe that the Temple in Jerusalem will be restored.