

Prophecies in the Bible (1)

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聖書の預言(1)

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Ecclesiastes

1:1 The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

1:2 "Utterly pointless," says the Teacher. "Absolutely pointless; everything is pointless."

1:3 What does a man gain from all of the work that he undertakes on earth?

1:14 I observed every activity done on earth. My conclusion: all of it is pointless—like chasing after the wind.

1:16 I told myself, "I have become greater and wiser than anyone who ruled before me in Jerusalem—yes, I have acquired a great deal of wisdom and knowledge."

1:17 So I dedicated myself to learn about wisdom and knowledge, and about insanity and foolishness. And I discovered that this is also like chasing after the wind.

[International Standard Version]

Psalms

90:9 All our days pass away in your wrath; our years fade away and end like a sigh.

90:10 We live for 70 years, or 80 years if we're healthy, yet even in the prime years there are troubles and sorrow. They pass by quickly and we fly away.

90:12 teach us to keep account of our days so we may develop inner wisdom.

I would like to begin a series of discussions from this meeting, regarding the future predicted in the Bible, that is to say, "what will happen in the future according to the Bible." This entire discussion is divided into four subjects.

Firstly, how does the Bible describe the future of each human being? Secondly, what does the Bible say about the churches, which are the body of Jesus and their future? Thirdly, how does the Bible predict the future of the people of Israel? And fourthly, how does the Bible explain the future of other nations?

It is easy to see how much importance is placed on the

words of prophecy as we read the Bible. We should then take to heart how the Bible describes the status of sinners. Furthermore, how does the entire Bible explain the salvation by Jesus? What does the Scripture say about the death of believers and the death of unsaved people?

2 Peter

1:19 Therefore we regard the message of the prophets as confirmed beyond doubt, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp that is shining in a gloomy place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

1:20 First of all, you must understand this: No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,

1:21 because no prophecy ever originated through a human decision. Instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

"We have the prophetic message." So Paul wrote to his fellow believers. The word of the Lord given to us is a lamp that is shining in a gloomy place. We have such words of the Lord in our hands. It is natural for us to have the desire to know what the Lord says about the future.

Many people dream of a beautiful future or an attractive world to come based on their own thoughts or desires. However, these are based on utterly wrong facts, which give them an idea that is far from the reality of the future described in the Bible. Such an idea based on human imagination will instantly collapse once it is hit by a storm.

Some other people talk to the devil and seek the answer as to what will come in their future. For instance, they come to see fortune tellers, augurs, conjurers or spiritual mediums to ask about their destiny in the future. Such people are attracted by the power of the devil and actually they have always existed through history.

Certainly all people, more or less, have a willingness to know what will happen to their future using such measures. However, we need to understand that fortune telling or such false prophecy only make us captivated and enslaved by the devil. As a consequence, it will only leave us anxious and joyless.

The Lord God does not intentionally leave our future unclear. The Lord wants us to clearly understand what will come in the future. We should not forget that not only are we given a privilege to do so, but we also bear a responsibility; it is the responsibility to read the Bible seriously in order to understand correctly what the Bible say about the future. We need to rely on the

word of God alone.

It is also necessary to see in the eyes of our hearts the wonderful future that the Lord has promised to us. We absolutely need to know what the Bible tells us about the future. The Old and the New Testaments are filled with the words of prophecy.

Both the Old and the New Testaments are themselves the revelation of God. And both the Old and the New Testaments have absolute authority. The Old and the New Testaments are by themselves the hope in our lives of faith. In the Scripture, we can see the image of the past, the present and the future in perfect harmony.

Let us ask ourselves nine simple questions and try to find the answers together.

[Question 1] What is the value of the prophetic words in the Bible?

2 Peter

1:21 because no prophecy ever originated through a human decision. Instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit

These words were spoken by the Lord.

Hebrews

1:1 God, having spoken in former times in fragmentary and varied fashion to our forefathers by the prophets.

Psalms

105:8 He remembers his eternal covenant— every promise he made for a thousand generations.

Psalms

33:11 But the Lord's counsel stands firm forever, the plans in his mind for all generations.

Jesus, of course said exactly the same thing.

Matthew

24:35 Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear."

Luke

24:44 Then he told them, "These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms had to be fulfilled."

This was what Jesus promised to us.

To this first question, we can answer this way; all prophecies in the Bible are everlasting and absolute

truth, which will definitely be fulfilled. It is because the honor and the glory of God depend on it. It is important to respect the promise of the Lord. If you fail to respect it, it is your sin.

[Question 2] How should we understand the origin of the words of prophecy?

In here, prophets refer to those who can relay the word of God to humans. The prophets were the people who heard what God told them and passed it to humans. Therefore, all words they proclaimed did not include their own thoughts or ideas at all, but consisted of nothing but the true and clear intention of the Lord himself.

[Question 3] What is the difference between the true prophecy and false prophecy?

True prophets are the ones upon whom the spirit of God came to open their eyes wide.

Numbers

24:2 When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him

24:3 and he spoke his message: "The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly.

1 Samuel

9:9 Previously in Israel, a person would say when he went to inquire of God, "Come on! Let's go to the seer!" because the person known as a prophet today was formerly called a seer.

1 Peter

1:10 Even the prophets, who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, carefully researched and investigated this salvation.

1:11 They tried to find out what era or specific time the Spirit of the Messiah in them kept referring to when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you in regard to the things that have now been announced to you by those who brought you the good news through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These are things that even the angels desire to look into.

It can be seen from these verses that the Spirit of Christ already dwelt in those prophets. They did not speak of their own thoughts, but announced to the people only what they received from above.

Ezekiel

13:2 Son of Man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, who even now are prophesying, and tell those prophets that keep on prophesying according to what they wish would happen, 'Listen to what the Lord says.'

13:3 This is what the Lord God says, 'How terrible it will be for the false prophets who walk according to their own wrong inclinations and see nothing.'

False prophets are those who prophesied out of their own imagination; it is written that they followed their own spirit and had seen nothing. True prophets that appeared in the Old and New Testaments were historians who could be trusted 100 per cent; they were the ones who could make the right judgment about the past, present and future of the world.

Ordinary people certainly are capable of recording incidents that happened in the past from their own perspectives. But, that is all they can do and thus, it may not always reflect absolute truth. Furthermore, regarding the incidents in the present time, they can only see the ongoing events through their narrow view, which makes it very difficult to make the right judgment.

Moreover, speaking of incidents to occur in the future, they can at best infer or discuss based on their fantastical imagination. Contrarily, prophets in the Bible were driven by the Spirit as they wrote down the prophecies, which made it possible for them to make a subjective and right judgment about the past, the present and the future. It is for this reason that the prophecies in the Bible provide us with an absolutely correct answer to our question as to what will happen to our future.

[Question 4] What kind of attitude should we take to these prophecies in the Bible?

Revelation

1:3 How blessed is the one who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy and obey what is written in it, for the time is near!

This is telling us that it is far more important for us to hear the words of the prophecies and obey them than to study the Scripture.

Revelation

22:18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy in this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will strike him with the plagues that are written in this book.

22:19 If anyone takes away any words from the book of this prophecy, God will take away his portion of the tree of life and the holy city that are

described in this book.

As is written in here, the words of prophecy in the Bible should be accepted as they are written and it is not allowed to interpret them the way we want. That is to say, if anyone adds to or takes off anything from the Bible, the Lord will have to punish them.

Hebrews

11:1 Now faith is the assurance that what we hope for will come about and the certainty that what we cannot see exists.

We need to not only hear the words in the Bible, but accept and obey them. That is to say, we have to live by these words.

[Question 5] Who can truly understand the prophecies in the Bible?

Paul wrote to brothers and sisters in Corinth;

1 Corinthians

2:10 But God has revealed those things to us by his Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the deep things of God.

2:11 Is there anyone who can understand his own thoughts except his own inner spirit? In the same way, no one can know the thoughts of God except God's Spirit.

After all, the answer to the question as to what kind of people can understand the prophecy is given in these verses and it is those who are led by the Holy Spirit. Let us look the gospel according to John and see what Jesus said;

John

14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything that I have told you.

John

16:13 Yet when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own accord, but will speak whatever he hears and will declare to you the things that are to come.

It is promised in here that the Spirit will guide us into all truth.

The famous story of the encounter of Jesus and the Bible scholar called Nicodemus is described in chapter 3 of John. There, it is emphasized how important it is for us to be born from above by the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, it is necessary for us to be newly reborn in

order to understand the prophecy in the Bible correctly.

Only those who accepted Jesus as their savior and believed in him will be born from above. Even if you have not experienced this regeneration, or are not yet convinced of your salvation, you still have a chance to experience this most important event in your life. All words in the Bible are written for each one of us.

Indeed, the Lord gave up his own life and sacrificed himself for each one of us. Many people believe that the central subject of the Bible is the teachings of Jesus; but, it is not true. The central theme of the Bible is the death of Jesus itself. Because Jesus was punished for us, there is no God at the present time who has to punish human beings.

[Question 6] What is actually prophesied in the Bible?

Luke

24:44 ...that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms had to be fulfilled.

This is what Jesus actually said. In this verse, the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms represented the entire Old Testament after all. Jesus stated that everything in the entire Old Testament pointed to himself alone.

Acts

10:43 All the prophets testify to this: everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Of course, there are many other parts that explain the same fact.

Acts

28:23 So they set a day to meet with Paul and came out in large numbers to see him where he was staying. From morning until evening he continued to explain the kingdom of God to them, trying to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets.

Romans

1:2 (God's gospel,) which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures...

We can see from these verses that Jesus is the one who was promised by all prophets.

Hebrews

13:8 Jesus, the Messiah, is the same yesterday and today—and forever!

Revelation

1:8 I am the Alpha and the Omega," declares the Lord God, "the one who is, who was, and who is coming, the Almighty.

Hebrews

9:28 so the Messiah was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people. And he will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to bring salvation to those who eagerly wait for him.

Paul also wrote very often that Jesus would come down from heaven.

Ephesians

1:10 to usher in the fullness of the times and to bring together in the Messiah all things in heaven and on earth.

This is the ultimate purpose of God.

1 Timothy

1:1 From: Paul, an apostle of the Messiah Jesus, by the command of God our Savior and the Messiah Jesus, our hope.

Let us take a look at the expression, "Christ Jesus our hope." If we do not have Jesus, we are just another miserable creature.

Titus

2:13 ...as we wait for the blessed hope and glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Jesus the Messiah.

As we go through many verses like this, we see that all things written in the Bible point to Jesus himself. Furthermore, Jesus himself was what was all prophesied in the Bible.

It is prophesied in the Old Testament that Jesus would come down to this world to redeem our sins and would appear in great glory. Contrarily, the New Testament revolves around the one who was already here, the one who is here and the one who will come here eventually.

From every page of the New Testament, it can be seen that its most important focus is the Lord Jesus himself. That is to say, all prophecies in the Bible converge to the second coming of Jesus.

[Question 7] How is the expression, "The Second Coming of Jesus" meaningful to us?

Matthew

24:27 because just as the lightning comes from the

east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

1 Thessalonians

4:15 For we declare to you what the Lord has told us to say: We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who have died.

4:16 With a shout of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of God's trumpet, the Lord himself will come down from heaven, and the dead who belong to the Messiah will rise first.

4:17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Believers in the early churches waited for the second coming of the Lord so eagerly and wholeheartedly with a vibrant faith in God. What I mean by a "vibrant faith" is the faith in which people eagerly wait for the second coming of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians

5:23 May the God of peace himself make you holy in every way. And may your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—remain blameless when our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, appears.

This was what Paul prayed very hard for his fellow believers.

1 John

2:28 Even now, little children, abide in him. Then, when he appears, we will have confidence and will not turn away from him in shame when he comes.

James

5:7 So be patient, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious crop from his land, being patient with it until it receives the fall and the spring rains.

5:8 You, too, must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the coming of the Lord is near.

What all these things tell us is that our purpose of learning the Bible should be in Jesus himself. When the Lord Jesus comes down to us and works on us, the eyes of our hearts will open and all prophecies in the Bible will be clearly explained. Therefore, as we learn the prophecies in the Bible and understand them better and better, through the revelation of Jesus, the glory and the dignity of the Lord will be clearly shown to us. It will manifest the purpose of the second coming of the Lord.

Jesus is the one and only, absolute Lord for each one

of us and for the nations. Only when we look up to Jesus alone and are determined to keep seeking him, we will be able to judge correctly what will happen in our future. The light shines from Jesus. Jesus is the one who can resolve all kinds of problems. We can have a positive hope in Jesus.

[Question 8] What is in such positive and vibrant hope?

1 Peter

1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah! Because of his great mercy he has granted us a new birth, resulting in an immortal hope through the resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, from the dead

1:4 and to an inheritance kept in heaven for you that can't be destroyed, corrupted, or changed.

1:5 Through faith you are being protected by God's power for a salvation that is ready to be revealed at the end of this era.

1:6 You greatly rejoice in this, even though you have to suffer various kinds of trials for a little while, 1:7 so that your genuine faith, which is more valuable than gold that perishes when tested by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus, the Messiah, is revealed.

1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,

1:9 because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1:10 Even the prophets, who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours, carefully researched and investigated this salvation.

1:11 They tried to find out what era or specific time the Spirit of the Messiah in them kept referring to when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you in regard to the things that have now been announced to you by those who brought you the good news through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These are things that even the angels desire to look into.

To summarize, the purpose of the Lord is not just to save us, but it is also to let us receive an inheritance kept in heaven. For all believers, nothing is more important than the appearance of Jesus.

Romans

5:2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace by which we have been established, and we boast because of our hope in God's glory.

Without this hope, there will be no true joy.

[Question 9] What does this vibrant hope mean to our lives? Paul answered this question;

Romans

8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.

What this verse tells us is that the vibrant faith of waiting wholeheartedly for his return is all that is necessary for believers.

Romans

12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in trouble, and persistent in prayer.

It is a truly wonderful blessing for anyone to come to believe that Jesus is coming back some day.

Romans

15:4 For everything that was written long ago was written to instruct us, so that we might have hope through the endurance and encouragement that the Scriptures give us.

The Old Testament was written in order to let us have a true hope. Because of this hope and comfort, we can endure anything that comes into our lives. If the Old Testament is a book like that, how much more of comfort and hope can the New Testament provide us with?

1 Thessalonians

5:8 But since we belong to the day, let's be sober. We must put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

The hope mentioned in this verse is the hope for salvation; in here it is also called the breastplate. Needless to say, the breastplate implies protection and safety against the devil.

Hebrews

6:19 That hope, firm and secure like an anchor for our souls, reaches behind the curtain.

The anchor is necessary to dock our souls safely to the pier and it represents the vibrant hope of ourselves.

Hebrews

10:23 Let us continue to hold firmly to the hope that we confess without wavering, for the one who made the promise is faithful.

What we have learned from all discussion of today can be summarized this way; without this vibrant hope for the future, we are all like blind men, who need to grope our way in the dark night.

Therefore, we need to have this vibrant hope as an extremely important part of our faith. Those who understand the purpose of the Lord will, even under the most difficult circumstances, be given comfort, which makes it possible for them to proceed in the right path. Those who have a clear vision of the future of this world, can understand the meaning of all difficulties they face in their lives and endure them. Those who wait for the second coming of the Lord wholeheartedly are able to overcome all troubles they are facing at the present time and will not be tied down by them.

That is to say, only those who know the purpose of the Lord in a real way can understand what is happening to them at the present time. It is only those who wait for Jesus that can make the best use of the time they are living in.

Revelation

22:20 The one who is testifying to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

We will be truly blessed if we can say these words from the bottom of our hearts.

End