

## The Teaching Of Jesus And Prophecy

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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The church of God is an oddity among the various creeds of Christendom. Many of you are probably thinking that statement is an understatement. We just do not believe like professing Christians believe. And it ends up usually getting us into trouble—we get trials about it—sometimes it ends up in persecution. But, we just do not believe like professing Christians believe.

For starters, we reject the idea of the Trinity, believing that only the Father and the Son are God-beings, not including the Holy Spirit at all in that.

We keep the Sabbath, not Sunday. And, that gets us into a great deal of trouble in this world where working on the Sabbath, and doing other activities on the Sabbath, is commonplace.

We baptize only adults, and by full immersion. We do not baptize children, or babies. We do not sprinkle them.

We believe in growing in righteous character, rather than "accept me as I am."

And, we could go on and on with various differences that we have with the mainstream Christian churches. In fact, we are so different from them that many of them do not consider us to be Christians at all! They think of us more than odd, but as a cult. We are listed on their cult-watchers websites, and in cult-watch books. And the main reason is because they think that because we are not Trinitarian, we are not truly Christian—that we worship a different God.

And they are right—we do not worship their god, but we worship the true God, the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ.

Some of them think of us as Jewish, or some sort of hybrid maybe, like Messianic Jews, because we keep the Sabbath, and the holy days. And, we eat only clean meats—all those different Jewish things we do—even eating matzos during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Now, as my dad has been showing in his sermon series lately, we believe in the necessity of works. And wow! You just cannot imagine the reactions you get from

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Protestants when you bring that one up! "You're trying to save yourself," they say. And, even though we tell them, "No, we believe in salvation by grace, but we also believe that you have to develop character by doing works to please God," they say, "No! You are trying to save yourself!"

It is almost as if works has become something evil, which is ridiculous. We are not earning our salvation. We are trying to please God by living and acting like His Son did when He was a human, and we are trying to grow into His image.

Another area where we also differ from so-called Christians is in prophecy.

We actually agree in some points with them. For instance, we, like they, are looking for a Beast to arise, the Anti-Christ. There is going to be some world ruler who is going to come in the near future. But in most other points of prophecy, we differ from the Protestant framework. They have a whole different idea of what is going to happen. There are a few specific things that are the same, but most of it is different.

They really do not look to the Millennium, or the Great White Throne Judgment. They do not look at them realistically because they think they will be raptured off to heaven. What is the Millennium to them? What does the Great White Throne Judgment mean to them, if they are just going to be in God's presence forevermore in heaven strumming a harp, on a cloud, or staring into His face for eternity? (That is a Catholic thing, the beatific vision.)

We, on the other hand, teach that we are going to rise in the air and meet Him as He is coming down to the earth, and we will join Him in rulership of the earth, not of heaven. We believe that we are going to be here on earth during His millennial Kingdom. We believe that we will be gods and ruling with Him, and helping the people throughout the Great White Throne Judgment in bringing many sons to glory. They do not have that outlook at all.

So, why is our prophetic outlook is so different from theirs? I mean, we are reading the same Book, are we not? What is it that causes them to look at it one way, and for us to look at it in an almost totally different way, even though the events are fairly plain (we think)?

There is a reason, and today we are going to examine one passage in particular that has befuddled many, but is really a key principle to interpreting prophecy correctly. There is one particular verse that we are going look at that spells it out very plainly why we look at prophecy differently than they do.

We are going to start in II Peter. However this is not the place where this particular passage is. But I want to start here because it contains a couple of principles of prophecy that we are all very much aware of. We will read the whole passage because we will see as we go along how it all links together.

**II Peter 1:16-21** For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased [referring back to the Transfiguration]." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed [made more sure], which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle, here, gives us a few fundamental principles regarding prophecy. And not only prophecy, but how to interpret it.

First he tells us that the prophecies given in God's Word (verse 19, specifically) are more sure than eyewitness accounts of something that had already taken place. We started this passage in talking about Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, being given honor and glory, being made as bright as the sun, and the vision of Moses, and Elijah talking with Him there, and a voice coming out of heaven confirming who He was.

Now what could be greater than that? Well, Peter says that the prophecies written in the Bible are more sure than even having seen something as wonderful as the Transfiguration. We have the prophetic word made more sure than even this.

So, we can be confident that the prophecies in the Bible *will* come to pass. We know from Isaiah 55:10-11 that once God speaks, and the word leaves His mouth, it does not return back to Him empty—meaning, that when it goes out, it accomplishes what God wants it to accomplish.

Remember? God spoke, and the earth existed! God said, "Let this happen, and it happened." And He spoke again, and it happened also. All God had to do was speak the word, and it happened. His Spirit carried out His will.

Again, we know that once He says something, it is going to come to pass. That is the first major principle.

The second principle is that prophecy cannot, and *should not* be privately interpreted. That is, we should not try to make prophecy fit our preconceived notions. There is one way that it is going to be fulfilled, and one way only, and that is God's way. And, God has given us enough information in the Bible—symbols, and interpretations of symbols, and explanations—that we can get a general idea of what He means. We do not necessarily have to understand it perfectly, but we can have a pretty good idea of how things all fit together. We cannot have our own private interpretation, our own personal notions, about how everything is going to take place. If we do, we are adding or subtracting to what God has given. There is only one way—God's way.

We can be confident that if we use the Bible to interpret itself, we can get a good idea of how things are going to go. It is when we start getting into the details, and speculating too far out, that we start to get into trouble—setting dates and that sort of thing.

So, we have these two basic principles that we have worked with for many years. They are very plain and simple as Peter states them, and they are not hard to understand.

But, then there is Revelation 19:9-10. It is in this passage that our specific principle is found.

**Revelation 19:9-10** Then he [the angel] said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

I bet you just figured out what the principle is—that last sentence. But, before we get to that sentence and dissect it, we first need to think about the context, because the context of this passage is very critical. We have to understand the environment of when this was said, how this was said, and why the angel said what he said. So, we must have the context first of all.

This passage is found in the New Testament's *primary* book of prophecy. And as such, Revelation contains numerous prophetic principles, and explanations of symbols, and

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terminology. These things bind together the prophecies of both Testaments. In a way, you could say that this is God's final word on prophecy. And so, He has to get everything in there that we need to help us to understand it.

So, these principles are being thrown at us pretty quickly. One of the things that I find interesting when I go through the book of Revelation is that it is full of definitions.

As part of my marking system, I use this reddish-brown triangle to denote all the places where there is a definition of some thing. Here in this passage, verse 10 above, is one of those definitions. And what I have found is that definitions are much more numerous here in the book of Revelation than in just about any other place in the Bible. Everywhere you go in the book of Revelation you seem to find some definition.

Here—just looking at this page, there is one in Revelation 20:14.

**Revelation 20:14** Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

The second death is the Lake of Fire. This is a definition scripture. It tells us something.

There are several others in the book of Revelation. I just turned over one page back, and here is another one:

**Revelation 17:15** "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

This is another definition. Waters represent these things.

You can do this all throughout the book of Revelation. Revelation is giving us information, definitions, explanations, and principles that we need to understand all of prophecy.

So, it is very important that this particular passage appears here (Revelation 19:10) where a lot of these things are taking place. It is important to read the book of Revelation with this in mind. It is not a hiding, but it is an exposing, an explanation. Revelation does not mean to cover up. Revelation means "to be revealed." So, that is what the book of Revelation is doing—it is opening up things for us.

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Once we realize that Revelation is opening things up for us, it becomes very clear that all the prophecies of the Bible hang together. They were all given by one Author. They all have one interpretation. All the symbols, wherever they are found in the Bible, have similar meanings from one place to the next. They were all made by one Mind. He does not want to confuse us by calling a symbol one thing in one place, and something else in a different place. That would not make sense. So, every time you see a certain symbol, it means just about the same thing each and every time. The symbols and ideas will be consistent throughout the whole Bible.

So, the angel's tidbit of information that he gives John, here, is another vital clue to the unity of prophecy, and the unity of interpretation.

The second tidbit is we need to know the context.

Revelation 19:9-10 follows directly after a proclamation about the all-powerful Lord God reigning, (verse 6) and the Kingdom of God proclaimed; and the other thing that comes just after is the prophecy of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—two huge events. One, the bringing of God's Kingdom down to this earth and it establishes Jesus Christ's rule. That is what everything has been looking toward in all of history.

And the second thing is probably what we have been looking forward to with the most expectation, and that is our salvation—our being made into god-beings, our being changed, and being invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. What a huge event! Christ rules, and we are married to Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This is everything we have been waiting for, everything we have been working for together with God.

So, the more immediate context is awesome! This a huge thing! It is big. So what the angel says immediately following it is also big. It is not a let-down. He is saying, "Okay! Everything we've seen up to this point in this prophecy leads to this thing, to the establishment of the Kingdom, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This is the goal!" It is an awesome and very amazing thing. The context is just huge.

So, everything up to this point reveals how these events will come to pass. But, it is in code and symbols, hidden unless you have the key. And the angel has been instructed, evidently, to give us the basic key to unlock the code. How do we get to this point? Here we will find shortly the code that unlocks it.

The angel is basically stating something that we could figure out from other places in the book, but this is where it is said most plainly. And, in the context, it makes it big.

The third thing we need to understand about this phrase is that it is part of the angel's rebuke of John. Remember, John has seen this, and was so amazed that he fell down and worshipped at the angel's feet. And the angel said, "Don't do that! Worship God!"

And then after that, he gives an explanation to John, basically encouraging him to realize who are our fellow servants in God's work. And not only that, he directs John's attention away from himself (the angel) and toward God—"Worship God"—because he wants to reiterate to John and to us that it is all about God. This is important. God is the only one worthy of worship. So he basically said to save your worship for the One who really deserves it.

I want to go back for a moment to one of the points I mentioned about the fellow servants. It is found in Hebrews, and it is another definition scripture passage.

**Hebrews 1:13** But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?

Obviously, there is no angel that has been given that honor. So then, verse 14 becomes a definition of what an angel is, and what angels do.

**Hebrews 1:14** Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

They are serving spirits. Ministering is another word for serving, helping, guiding, and assisting. They are sent forth to serve for those who will inherit salvation. So God sends them forth to help us become inheritors of salvation.

Okay, this is similar to what the angel tells John back in Revelation 19. He said to him, "Don't worship me! I am your fellow servant, and I am the fellow servant of your brethren."

This is awesome to think about. It really is. Despite the angel's great power and majesty, they are willing to serve us while they are serving God to bring us to salvation.

The wording that the angel uses here in verse 10 is designed to expand John's and our thinking about God's great plan. This is not something that was just cooked up in the past few years. This is not something that Jesus alone is doing. This is something that has been going on for millennia, even from before the time the angels were created.

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And, it is not just God, but He has got thousands or millions of servants who are all working toward this end, all with a kind of glory that we do not have. We are a little lower than the angels. They are all much stronger, and more mentally able to figure things out than we are, yet they are willing to humble themselves to be servants for us.

In a sense, you could say that the angel is saying, "Look John! Don't you realize what is going on here? I've been sent to help you. Why are you worshipping me? I've been sent to help you understand this, and not only you, but all your fellow servants out there. Understand how big this is, how wonderful this is, how great it is. What a stupendous goal it is to have the Kingdom of God and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb as our goal. And there is a great, big, awesome, powerful team behind you and your fellow servants working toward this very same goal. Don't worship me; I'm just one of the team. We're going to get you there."

If you cooperate, they are going to do all they can to make sure things work as God wants them to work. He sends them out, and they do His will behind the scenes, invisibly. We do not know what they are doing, but they are working for the same purposes and goals that we are.

The angel said to John that God's two greatest creations—the righteous angels, and His called-out human beings—are fellow servants in His great cause. "You're not alone, John." (You can put your own name there.)

Even though it looks like we are alone at times—out of millions of people, we are only *one* who knows the truth—we have a great team behind us. That is really mind-expanding when you think about it. Who knows how many angels are out there doing a job for God? Certainly we do not know. But, they are there, moving events forward for God.

So, the angel is emphasizing the stupendous magnitude of God's great purpose. We are all fellow servants trying to get this done.

One other thing before we get to the specific sentence. There *may be* a play on words here. I am not exactly sure. The words in Greek can be understood in several different ways. John had tried to worship this angel, who had imparted the prophecy to him. Now, angels are known as spirits are they not? Remember the sentence, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." This angel had been imparting prophecy to him. And angels are called spirits. So, there is a possibility that John could have considered the angel as the spirit of prophecy. Understand where I am taking this? The angel maybe was the spirit of prophecy. He was the one angel that was sent to impart prophecy.

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However, the angel's reply is, "No, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. I am not the spirit of prophecy. I don't have any honor or glory when it comes to this. I am just a servant."

So, that is the play on words.

Part of the reason that this verse is so problematic, or befuddling, is because the translation from the Greek can be taken several different ways. The translators chose to render three specific words in theological terms, rather than common, ordinary, understandable words. So, they tended to make things more "spiritual," rather than to translate them into their mundane, common, pedestrian words. Once you render them into ordinary speech, the idea behind the sentence becomes very clear.

The word testimony is the Greek word *marturia*, which we get our English word martyr from. A martyr is a witness, one who bears testimony. And, that is the basic idea of this word—testimony, witness, message, or a word. It is something brought forward for proof or evidence.

So, the testimony of Jesus becomes the witness of Jesus, or the message of Jesus, or the word of Jesus. It can be taken so far as to be the teaching of Jesus, the preaching of Jesus.

What is so understandable that they should have translated the word into testimony is because this phrase is found throughout the book of Revelation. And, they almost always translated it as testimony, or testify, or witness.

This begins early in the book of Revelation, speaking about testimony, and testifying. This is a theological term. We are giving proof, giving evidence.

**Revelation 1:1-2** 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, who bore witness [there is the word] to the word of God, and to the testimony [there it is again] of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

So, as we get into the book of Revelation, this idea of testifying, or witnessing, jumps right out at us. And what it is telling us is that these things are proofs, and are evidence. Remember that Revelation means an unveiling, an exposing, an explanation. So, he is telling us that John bore witness; he has eyewitness proof of the Word of God. He

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handled the Word of God. He heard the Word of God. He saw the Word of God. You will find that in I John 1:1-3. He told us that he was a witness of all these things. And it also mentions the testimony of Jesus Christ. That was the evidence that He brought.

So, the testimony of Jesus that we see in Revelation 19:10 must be what Jesus said and did. Is that not what he gave as proof? It was His life, His teaching—all that He did, and all that He said.

Now, we could really make it really specific and say that the testimony of Jesus is what God gave Him to reveal to us. It is that simple. It does not have to be theological. It is just what Christ imparted—both by word and deed.

This theme of testimony goes all the way through to the end of the book. In this next passage, Jesus testifies through a proxy, an angel:

**Revelation 22:16a** "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. . .

Now we see that the testimony is specifically aimed toward the churches. And then He backs it up with who He is:

**Revelation 22:16b** . . . .I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

Now, does that not make you think of II Peter 1:19, "the morning star rises in our hearts"? I told you it comes together in drips and drops. There is also something in verse 18:

**Revelation 22:18a** For I testify to everyone [That is John.]. . .

**Revelation 22:20a** He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."

There is no doubt who that is. And then John writes:

**Revelation 22:20b** . . . .Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Jesus is the Testifier. He is the Revelator. This book is not called, "The Revelation of Saint John, the Divine," even though it says that in many Bibles. We just read a moment ago in Revelation 1:1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants." That is His testimony—what He came to reveal, to tell us, to communicate. This idea is repeated constantly throughout the whole book of Revelation.

So, what did He teach? What did He reveal? What was His message?

We see it in a general way in the following verse:

**Mark 1:14-15** Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

What did He teach? What did He preach? What did He reveal? The good news of the coming Kingdom of God and all that pertains to it. That is what He came to reveal, and to tell us.

**Revelation 22:8-9** Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things [He did it again. He must have forgotten what happened just a few chapters before!]. Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that, for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

Did you notice that there is a difference between what he said before, and what he says here? Before, he said, "I am your fellow servant of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus." This time he said, "I am your fellow servant and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book." This gives us an understanding of what the testimony of Jesus implies. Specifically, it is the words of this particular book, the book of Revelation. But, it can also be expanded out to all the words of Jesus in the Bible. In fact, the whole Bible is the revelation of God's will.

So, we can see here that the testimony of Jesus includes the whole counsel of God, which Paul said that he failed not to give to the people. (Acts 20:27)

As mentioned, the idea of testimony runs throughout the book of Revelation. In

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Revelation 6:9 it talks about martyrs being killed because of the testimony that they held. And in Revelation 12:10-11, it talks again about people being saved by the testimony that they held, the testimony of Jesus which they believed. And in verse 17 it says that the dragon goes after those who keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus Christ.

So, we can get real general here and say that the testimony of Jesus is everything in the Bible.

But, more specifically, and I think that this is what the angel was getting at, is that he is talking about the specific revelation of Jesus Christ in His life—what He brought; what makes Him unique in the Bible—His specific teachings—the gospel, the good news.

So, what I believe is that the testimony of Jesus is none other than the revelation of God's truth, and His plan of salvation through Jesus Himself—what Jesus Himself said and did are the things most important here. Those are the things that take precedence among the testimony of the whole Bible. The whole Bible is inspired. But, there is something different, a jump up of quality and real deep meaning, when it comes to what Jesus said. He is the Son.

So, what Jesus said, what He taught, is the governor, if you will, of the rest of God's revelation.

We will see this in the very next word, which is "spirit." It is the word "pneuma" in Greek. This word is most often used of the Holy Spirit. That is the haggion pneuma. This is a spirit that is different, the spirit that is holy.

What the word pneuma means in itself is the essence, the nature, the heart, the core, the vital principle, the driving influence, or the immaterial force of something. At its most basic, it means breath, or wind. You do not see your breath (unless it is a really cold day, then you see fog). The idea here is that it is the essence that you cannot see. But, just because it is invisible does not mean that it is nothing. That is not so. Even though it is invisible, it has a great deal of power—it can influence, it can drive, it can guide.

So, we should not think of this in this particular context as the Holy Spirit. And, it does not mean a good or evil spirit, or any kind of ghost or angel or that sort of thing. It is not suggesting a personal being at all. It is suggesting a force, or an essence.

Now, John in particular seems to use the word pneuma in this fashion a lot in comparison to some of the other authors. An example is in John 6:63 where he uses it

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two different ways:

**John 6:63** "It is the [Holy] Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

That second mention of spirit is an invisible force, a guiding force, a driving force. You cannot see words as they come out of a person's mouth. You can see them when they are written down, obviously. But the *idea* behind a word, whether written or spoken, is invisible—and words can make people do all kinds of things. It is an invisible, guiding, driving force.

John also uses this in his epistle of I John, but in a slightly different way:

**I John 4:6** [He says] We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

He is speaking about ideas here. The spirit of truth (here) is not a personal being, but it is the driving and guiding influence that truth has. The same is true for the spirit of error. Error can also be a driving, guiding influence on people—something of power.

So, we need to put this back into Revelation 19:10 in this light—that it is a guiding, driving force or influence. We can even say that it means the overriding intent.

You can think of it this way—the separation of powers is the spirit of the US Constitution. Would you say that is the governing principle—the thing that underlies the way our government is supposed to be set up so that no one part of government becomes too strong? The overriding concept in the Constitution is to make sure that everybody has a check and a balance.

So, we could say that the separation of powers is the spirit, the governing principle, the guiding essence of the US Constitution. That is the intent of the framers. Right? Do you understand how the word spirit is fitting in here?

Another example from current events: Envy and hatred are the spirit of terrorism. Envy and hatred are evil. They are emotions. But, they do guide, and direct, and govern those who commit terrorism.

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That is how spirit is being used in this passage. Spirit is a vital principle, a driving influence, or a force, which we cannot see, but it governs.

The angel is telling us then, that Christ's message—the gospel—is the essence, the core, the governing force, or vital principle of prophecy.

So then, what about the word "prophecy" itself? It is the word *profeeteias*. This is the normal word for prophecy used in the New Testament. It means inspired utterance, or revelation. It can also mean, more specifically, divine prediction. It is the easiest of the three to understand, because we use it this way all the time.

It can refer to either inspired preaching by which God calls and converts a person and helps them to grow; or it could mean the foretelling of future events. Now, in a book like Revelation, which is prophecy as we think of it—foretelling—we have to give the tip of the hat to divine prediction. But it certainly applies to preaching as well.

If you will remember my sermons on I Corinthians, I went through chapter 14, and the word in the King James and New King James is prophesy, but it is really divine utterance, or inspired speaking. It could be either way.

This word occurs only seven times (it is kind of interesting that it is *only* seven times) in the book of Revelation. But, it is used both ways depending on how you want to look at it. In chapter 1, verse 3 it says,

**Revelation 1:3** 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.

You can see from that it could go both ways—it could mean simply inspired revelation, or divine prediction. Another one is in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter where it is speaking about the two witnesses,

**Revelation 11:6** These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy. . . .

They could be predicting future events, or they could be preaching. It could go either way. And in Revelation 19:10 I believe it is speaking about prediction.

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We have gone a long way, and we have been talking about this one verse. So, what can we bring it down to? To start, I want to paraphrase that last sentence of Revelation 19:10 from what we have just learned. I think it is very simple.

"The teaching of Jesus Christ is the key to revelation."

That is pretty simple, is it not? Once you take the theological terms out, it becomes pretty easy to understand. In Romans, we will see Paul verify this in one way.

**Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ [there is our subject], for it [the gospel of Christ] is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Christ's gospel, what He came to reveal to us, is the power, the force, that immaterial governing principle that propels us into eternal life in God's Kingdom. It is what is going to help get us saved, if you will. Why? Because the gospel unlocks the mysteries of true righteousness.

**Romans 1:17a** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. . . .

So, in the gospel, God through Jesus Christ exposes to our mind what it takes to go from a little bit of faith to the great faith needed to be saved—the faith of a man to the faith required for salvation.

So, if we practice the gospel, not just hear it, not just believe it, but practice it, then it will lead us to faithfulness, and eventually to eternal life. So, the gospel, being what Jesus revealed, is the key that unlocks prophecy too, for all prophecy is directed toward that same goal—the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and the salvation of those who will be the kings and priests in that Kingdom under Jesus Christ. It all works together.

Turn to the book of Matthew, and the section on the Transfiguration, and we will see another proof of this idea.

**Matthew 17:1-5** Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to

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them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

Now, what the transfiguration does is reveal the importance of Jesus relative to the great Old Testament luminaries Moses, who was the great lawgiver, and Elijah, who was the great prophet. Peter seeing Jesus there with Moses and Elijah wanted to build a tabernacle for each one of them, as if they were equal. And God cut him off while he was still speaking. He said, "No! This is *My* beloved Son. Hear *Him!*"

Moses and Elijah are not as important as the Son. The Son takes precedence over Moses and Elijah. What He says as the Son is more important than what they said as servants.

Turn to Hebrews where Paul basically says the same thing.

**Hebrews 3:1-6** Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His [God's] house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

That is how much difference there is between Moses and Jesus Christ. Moses was simply a servant, and he served *in* the house that was built by another. Jesus Christ built the house. And He is the Son of the Owner. He has the power, and the glory, and He gets the greater of everything, because He is the Son, and not just a servant.

So, because He is greater, He is more worthy of honor, and of attention. So when we have something that Moses said, versus something that Jesus Christ said, they are not going to disagree, but what Jesus Christ said is the governor for what Moses said.

Do you understand what I mean here? What Jesus said is the bedrock on which everything else sits. He is the chief cornerstone, as you will recall. The prophets and the apostles hang together on Him. He is like the keystone of an arch. The arch will fall without the keystone being in place. And it is the keystone that everything is balanced off of.

So, when there is something in the Old Testament that we do not understand, if we find what Jesus said on that subject, that should be the baseline of our understanding. Then, we go back to the Old Testament and see how that fits in with what Jesus said. Jesus is the key. He is the One who is the most important.

Turn back to the gospel of John, because the apostle John basically starts off with this thought after he gets finished with the theophany at the beginning. He then begins talking about Jesus Christ and what kind of person he was.

**John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten [the Son] of the Father, full of grace and truth.

He was absolutely complete in everything. John wants you to key in on these ideas of grace and truth. And then he said,

**John 1:15-17** John [the Baptist] bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" And of His fullness [completeness] we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, [but] grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Grace and truth have a bit higher standing than mere law.

**John 1:18** No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

That is how unique He is! He is the only One who really knew and could reveal the Father! And it was because He was the Son.

So, notice the multiple confirmations here. John divides Jesus' revelation into two major

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categories—grace and truth. Grace includes all the undeserved gifts from God starting with salvation by grace, as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit. These are things we do not deserve, but because Christ paid the penalty for us, they are given to us freely. Truth includes knowledge and understanding in all doctrine and prophecy.

This cannot mean that what was revealed in the Old Testament is false. Jesus brought the truth. And Jesus said that the scripture cannot be broken and He was talking about the Old Testament. He says that in John 10:35.

So what this must mean is that Jesus' message takes priority. It is the keystone, and it takes precedence.

And finally, of course, we have the confirmation of what John the Baptist said, that Jesus and the message that Jesus brought is preferred above himself, meaning above John the Baptist, and his message. We will see this in action in John 3.

I think I have established fairly well that the Jesus and what He said is our baseline. He is the Rock on which everything is built, and that includes prophecy.

We will see this in Matthew 24, the Olivet Prophecy—Jesus' great prophecy where He lays out end time events one after another. Therefore, because it came directly from His mouth, it is what we should be basing end-time events on first of all.

We are going to read only verses 3 through 8 to give you an example, and I want you to be thinking about Revelation 6, and the first four seals:

**Matthew 24:3-8** Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many [first seal in Revelation 6:2]. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom [second seal in Revelation 6:4]. And there will be famines [third seal in Revelation 6:5-6], pestilences [fourth seal in Revelation 6:7-8]. . .

How many Protestants (if you have read their take on prophecy) believe that the first seal is the proclamation of the gospel? A lot of them do. They look at what is said in

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Revelation 6:2 and they say that is Jesus going out preaching the gospel, and conquering nations for Himself and His Kingdom. But, that is not what Jesus said. If they would just look in Matthew 24, where He tells them, and gives them the key to the seals, the first seal is not true Christianity, but *false* Christianity going out to conquer; people coming in His name and saying "I am the Christ," and deceiving many.

When we see them in Revelation we see that these seals build upon one another. It is the going out and deceiving many in the name of Christ that lead to wars, and wars to famine, and famines to pestilences and death. They build upon one another.

So, they did not use the testimony of Jesus as the key to revelation. They used their own thinking processes. They used a misreading of history.

Take a look at another one in Daniel 9:27. This is part of the Seventy Weeks prophecy:

**Daniel 9:27** "Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."

**Matthew 24:15** "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

He does not define right here in Matthew 24 what exactly He means. He gives you the impression that it is indeed an object of worship of some pagan thing in the Holy Place, right? So, we need to turn to Luke 21:20. It is the same thing, but from Luke's perspective and he adds something.

**Luke 21:20-21** "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Aha! Matthew 24 did not give us the full picture. It gave us part of the picture. So, when we put it together with the parallel account in Luke, we find that the abomination of desolation *begins* with Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, and it *ends* with an abominable image set up in the Holy Place.

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So, when Daniel is speaking about the abomination of desolation, he is speaking about an entire process of events that Jesus defines for us as beginning with the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies, and ending with the desolation of the Holy Place. Jesus gave us information that we lacked to help us to understand more fully.

So, how is this used practically? Because, this was fulfilled in type in 70 AD when the Roman armies came, and surrounded Jerusalem, besieged it, and eventually destroyed everything. That was certainly an abomination of the Temple.

Do you know that Josephus tells us that on the day of Pentecost in 68 AD an angel came down and proclaimed at the Temple, "Let us remove from hence." "Let's get out of here!" in the vernacular.

The Christians heard, saw what Jesus said, that the abomination of desolation would take place starting with the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies, and at this time, they had *not quite* surrounded Jerusalem. But, they understood that it was going to take place quickly. So, they believed the angel and got out before Jerusalem was surrounded by armies. They were moved to Pella. The church was spared that awful siege, famine, and destruction of Jerusalem. But the Jews, who only had the book of Daniel and did not have the revelation of Jesus Christ, had to suffer.

See how the teaching of Jesus is the key to understanding prophecy properly?

Well, this reaches out further. In Luke 4:16 it says that it was Jesus' *custom* to keep the Sabbath. And in I John 2:6 it says very clearly that if we want to follow Jesus, we have to do what He did.

And so the idea, here, is that it is not just prophecy, but anything that Jesus said and did is our example, and we need to follow that because it is the key to the truth. If we do, then, what He did, we are on the right track. We are at the baseline. And if we go forward, we will be doing what is right.

In my terms, this is the Archegos principle. He is the Forerunner, He sets the pattern, He is the example, He is the model that we are to follow in the same way that He did.

If you would look at John 3:26-36, you will see John the Baptist's testimony about Christ, what he says there covers the whole gamut of revelation. Jesus is the revelator of all truth. He holds the key to all understanding, from the first glimmer of belief to the final judgment of God, which is as far as God has revealed His plan to us.

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So, the testimony of Jesus covers not only everything in theology, but also everything in prophecy too. He is the base, and the keystone.

When you read John 3, you will see that John the Baptist references the Bridegroom. Christ is the Bridegroom. "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." (John 3:29) We are the bride. He is our Fiancé, as it were, and we will marry Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. It is the bride's responsibility to recognize how *great* the Bridegroom is. She needs to realize how much she wants to marry Him, and how much our salvation depends upon our relationship with Him.

In conclusion, turn to Hebrews:

**Hebrews 2:1-4** Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

How shall we escape if we neglect the very basic and rudimentary and necessary teaching of Jesus Christ?