

WHAT DID JESUS SAY?

B. Purpose (Significance) of this Study

B4. Demonstrate: Prophecy is Pattern

Jesus, the sustainer of all thingsⁱ, is also the complete measure of Godliness. As we learn in Hebrews 1:2-3,

“His Son, whom [God] has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³who being the brightness of His glory and *the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power*, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

So in our fallen nature, we look to Jesus as the standard of perfection. He is our point of reference for why we do all that we do as followers of Christ. We are his ambassadors of this fallen world. Though we are not perfect, still we strive to follow his exampleⁱⁱ. This requires us to get to know who he is, and immerse ourselves in all of his word. To learn from Jesus, we must know what he said.

As we begin to study Revelation, we recognize quickly that it claims to be prophecyⁱⁱⁱ. To be proficient students of prophecy, we should investigate how important prophecy is in the Bible, and how it pertains to Jesus in particular. It is pointed out in Revelation 19:10,

“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 COL 1:15-17, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and *in Him all things consist.*

ⁱⁱ LUKE 13:24, Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

ⁱⁱⁱ REV 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.

Jesus fulfilled prophecy when he began his ministry. He read from the scroll of Isaiah in Luke 4:18-21,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”
²⁰Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹And He began to say to them, "*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.*"

It follows, then, that Jesus’ return will also fulfill Scripture, fulfilling prophecy.

Jesus expects us to recognize the pattern of prophecy. He gives many examples of how we can apply this principle. A classic illustration is given as Jesus enlightens Nicodemus in John 3:14-15,

“as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Jesus makes reference here to an incident in which the children of Israel were dying from the bite of snakes. God provides a surprising remedy in response to the supplication of the people in Numbers 21:8-9,

“the Lord said to Moses, "*Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.*" ⁹So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”

The true significance of this passage would be lost were it not for Jesus to explain it to us. Now, we can see that Moses was acting out a prophecy of the crucifixion of Christ. It is also clear that God had instructed Moses how to perform this action. The reason for this procedure had a clear motive in relieving the local problem of fiery serpents killing the people. What was unclear, until Jesus explained, was the prophetic aspect of Moses’ action. This should alert us to revisit other Scriptures in which God had instructed people to do something peculiar.

We should be looking to see if prophetic aspects appear that seem to go beyond the local setting. This is not as difficult a task to do as we might think at first. Since, the prophetic patterns begin to immerge as we read the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. With our heightened awareness of how they might be acting out prophecy, we start to see elements of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and glorification. Such as in Genesis 22:1-2,

“it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ²Then He said, "*Take now your son, your only son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

This should echo in our minds of John 3:16,

“For God so loved the world that *He gave His only begotten Son*, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Did Abraham know that he was acting out prophecy of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ? He did realize that the local problem would have to be solved by God, as we read in Hebrews 11:17-19,

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," ¹⁹concluding that *God was able to raise him up, even from the dead*, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”

Further, there is a hint of Abraham's foresight of the prophecy being fulfilled by his prophetic statement in Genesis 22:7-8,

“Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸And Abraham said, "My son, *God will provide for Himself the lamb* for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.”

Indeed, this is the title given to Jesus by John the Baptist in John 1:29,

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*”

However, the connotations of Jesus' title, the 'Lamb of God', are much more profound than we realize.

In Egypt, many generations later, God instructed Moses that in order to save the children of Israel a lamb must be killed. The lamb's blood was to cover the saved from destruction. As we read in Exodus 12:21-24,

"Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and *kill the Passover lamb*.²²"And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.²³"For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.²⁴"And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever."

Thus, the Passover lamb foreshadows the 'Lamb of God', who, by shedding of his blood, saved those who follow God's provided way of redemption. As an apostle of Jesus points out in his letter, Peter 1:17-19 says,

"if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,¹⁹ but with *the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*"

When we are familiar with the patterns of prophecy, we will recognize such events as who opens the seals of the scroll in Revelation^{iv}.

What else did Jesus say about prophecy? He expected Jerusalem to recognize the day of their visitation^v, the day the Messiah would be presented, the day foretold in Daniel 9:25,

^{iv} REV 5:5-6, one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." ⁶And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a *Lamb as though it had been slain*, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

“Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.”

Jesus expects us to know God’s word. We do not want to be as the Sadducees, who failed to know the Scriptures and the power of God^{vi}. Instead, we should even know how to properly apply them both to our lives. Jesus emphasizes our expected knowledge, as he does here in Matthew 22:31-32,

“concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³²I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

Since Jesus requires us to be knowledgeable of, and to abide in His word, we should do our utmost to build each other up in this regard. With the Holy Spirit to guide us in all truth^{vii}, we will begin to see how the individual threads make up the grand design of God, which includes the pattern of prophecy.

^v LUKE 19:41-44, as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴²saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³"For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴"and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because *you did not know the time of your visitation.*"

^{vi} MATH 22:29, Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

^{vii} JOHN 16:12-13, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, *He will guide you into all truth*; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.