

Prophecy Through the Bible – Books of Prophecy

GOOD MORNING TO ALL OF YOU

We are meeting down here in Fellowship Hall for the first time in a long time but I was told the Deacons were having their meeting upstairs in our old room, and likely they would be doing this for an ongoing period. I'm not sure why that is, but I don't want my class-time shortened on a regular basis so we pushed to get this set up down here. We can also start the coffee again if someone will get here to make it. I know the kitchen remains to be cleaned and put back into usable condition, but we can meet here in the meantime.

Last week we ended our study with a reading of Ezekiel Chapter 1. It begins with a vision from God to the priest Ezekiel, on the banks of the Kebar River in Babylon. The vision is of a mysterious and awe inspiring scene where it appears that a chariot of God brings a figure similar to a man to speak to Ezekiel. The imagery and our imaginations can go wild with speculation about what it all means.

If you will permit me to discuss this scene, I believe I can clear up some of the vision for you. We understand from later in Ezekiel that the beings with 4 faces and wings are Cherubs. In their plural form we add the suffix "im" and they become **Cherubim**.

We also know that Angels have particular roles or "ministries" for God. Cherubs were the guardians of the throne and were placed to guard the Lord's Holiness. We also know that when man was driven from the Garden of Eden, Cherubim (more than one) were placed to guard the entrance to keep man from returning to it... *Flashing swords, many faces, and multiple wings.*

Ezekiel 10 – The Glory of God leaves the Temple

*¹⁵ Then the cherubim rose upward. **These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar River.***

¹⁶ When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the cherubim spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not leave their side. ¹⁷ When the cherubim stood still, they also stood still; and when the cherubim rose, they rose with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

¹⁸ Then the glory of the LORD departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim. ¹⁹ While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

*²⁰ **These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River, and I realized that they were cherubim.** ²¹ Each had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what looked like human hands. ²² Their faces had the same appearance as those I had seen by the Kebar River. Each one went straight ahead.*

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I believe that the Glory of God left the Temple then, and only returned with Jesus came to the Temple and when He was crucified. I believe that we can liken this to when the Holy Spirit is not in a church building or service any longer. The functions and form remain the same, but the missing presence of God denies the power. This was manifest in the continual disobedience and judgment of Israel in its history. After all, Israel means “fights with God”. What an apt name for His people throughout their history.

Similarly, in the modern times we are seeing individual churches die-off, lose their vitality and zeal for God, and whole denominations retreat into obscurity within the family of God. They are following the denomination programs and ideas, like “Church growth” in SBC circles that emphasize programs and marketing to the people. The best churches are following the early New Testament models of preaching and teaching the Word of God and discipling those that are followers so they can go out and witness to others. You might call them “remnant churches”.

Instead many of today’s church leaders are preaching and teaching themes and pushing things that attract the “world”. These may build audiences and money but are not a body of called out believers. Of course the Bible predicts that in the last days we will see the **Apostasia**, or the **falling away** of the church. This is coming in both types of apostasy.

The first is the slow drifting away of the church from the historic doctrines and practices. They get deemphasized then dropped but it happens slowly and many do not notice. This is analogous to the frog in the pot of hot water. Suddenly you look around and many of the old practices are no longer there. They are deemed “old school” and the modern people will not respond unless we adopt the newer, flashier ways of the world. We see it in the absence of doctrinal teaching, the lack of focus on discipleship but increasing diffused meetings like “small groups” that do no in-depth studies. De-emphasis on mid week or Sunday night services because people “don’t come”. We look for guidance from the denominational people who fostered the ill-conceived changes in the first place. We are encouraged to follow the “Community Church” model with high energy worship and charismatic preaching.

Obviously the church needs to change to meet the needs of the community but always within the teaching and instruction of the Bible. People are really no different than in earlier times. They still need to see God worshipped, taught and the power of the Cross displayed. They need to see a Godly life modeled in practice as well as in public.

The second method of apostasy is the “enlightenment” of pastors and church leaders into reading into the Bible new ideas of culture that are not there, and proclaiming them as doctrine. We see this in the various movements like “replacement theology, or dominion theology, or wealth theology, or social/liberation theology”. All of these new theologies are non biblical and heretical but they have many large prosperous churches and pastors leading them...and leading their followers away from God and His Word. So this example of Apostasy ***is moving directly away from Scriptures.***

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The drifting away form of Apostasy is more insidious and more prevalent in the Evangelical Church today and has begun the process of forming the last of the Revelation churches Christ addressed letters to...the Laodicean church. This church is the “who cares” church or the lukewarm church.

2 Samuel 22: 10-14...the Chariots of God

¹⁰ *He parted the heavens and came down;
dark clouds were under his feet.*

¹¹ *He mounted the cherubim and flew;
he soared on the wings of the wind.*

¹² *He made darkness his canopy around him—
the dark rain clouds of the sky.*

¹³ *Out of the brightness of his presence
bolts of lightning blazed forth.*

¹⁴ *The LORD thundered from heaven;
the voice of the Most High resounded.*

If you do a concordance search on Cherub you will find many other verses discussing the ornate building plans for the Ark of the Covenant with 2 Cherubs facing each other with wings outstretched over the “Mercy Seat” on top of the Ark. You will find wooden carvings of Cherubs inside the Holy of Holies, and you will find this interesting set of verses in **Ezekiel 28:11-19**

¹¹ *The word of the LORD came to me: ¹² “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says:*

*“You were the seal of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.*

¹³ *You were in Eden,
the garden of God;*

*every precious stone adorned you:
carnelian, chrysolite and emerald,
topaz, onyx and jasper,
lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl.*

*Your settings and mountings were made of gold;
on the day you were created they were prepared.*

¹⁴ *You were anointed as a guardian cherub,
for so I ordained you.*

*You were on the holy mount of God;
you walked among the fiery stones.*

¹⁵ *You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created*

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till wickedness was found in you.
¹⁶ *Through your widespread trade
you were filled with violence,
and you sinned.*
*So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God,
and I expelled you, guardian cherub,
from among the fiery stones.*
¹⁷ *Your heart became proud
on account of your beauty,
and you corrupted your wisdom
because of your splendor.*
*So I threw you to the earth;
I made a spectacle of you before kings.*
¹⁸ *By your many sins and dishonest trade
you have desecrated your sanctuaries.*
*So I made a fire come out from you,
and it consumed you,
and I reduced you to ashes on the ground
in the sight of all who were watching.*
¹⁹ *All the nations who knew you
are appalled at you;
you have come to a horrible end
and will be no more.”*

These verses are related to Lucifer and not the king of Tyre but they used him as a sample of this evil leader. In addition, there were **cherubs** woven into the fabric of the veil in the temple to guard the inside of the Holy of Holies. This is the veil that was split in-two when Christ died on the Cross symbolizing that those who believed would now have direct access to God and He would no longer be bound into the confines of the Temple and no longer forbid their entry and access to Him.

So what do we know about Cherubs or Cherubim? They are Guardian Angels that exist to protect the Holiness of God and guard whatever He values, like the Throne. They are also chariot angels. They ride whatever chariot is meant by the wheels and legs in Ezek 1 and they hold up the Throne of God and deliver the LORD to personally travel to wherever He wants to go. They are around the fiery stones of the Altar.

Satan was known as **Lucifer** and was a Cherub who sinned against God and is now the leader of the Fallen Angels.

There are other classes of Angels, like Archangels (Michael), and some say there are other Archangels but that is from the non-canonical book **Tobit** which is in the Apocrypha but not seen as “inspired”

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scripture by most Christians. This apocryphal book lists Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel as Archangels. In Jewish tradition and the book of Enoch (not Bible) it suggests 7 archangels. Archangel simply means Chief Angel. The Bible only identifies Michael as an Archangel although there are some verses that indicate there may be others, too.

Gabriel

The name Gabriel means '**God's Hero**' and he is God's special messenger angel. On several occasions in the Bible he is given the job of coming to earth to give important announcements and tell of special events.

So it was Gabriel who had the amazing job of telling Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus, the king of the universe! It's also highly likely that it was Gabriel who spoke to Joseph and told him that Mary would have a special baby called Jesus. It is also Gabriel who spoke to Zechariah to announce the birth of John the Baptist.

Nowhere in the Bible is Gabriel called an archangel, although in Jewish folklore he is one of the seven archangels. In Daniel 9:21 it says that Gabriel arrives in 'swift flight', but it doesn't mention wings! Swift flight could just mean quickly!

Selected verses from Daniel Ch 8

¹⁵ While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man. ¹⁶ And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision."

¹⁷ As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. "Son of man, ¹⁸ he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end."

¹⁸ While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet.

²⁶ "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."

²⁷ I, Daniel, was worn out. I lay exhausted for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding.

I'm not sure what Gabriel actually looks like but he looks like a man. Daniel was terrified of him and fell to the ground. So scared was he that he went into a deep sleep and could not get up. Gabriel reaches down and lifts him up and sets him on his feet. When the encounter is over, he is exhausted for days and was appalled by the vision since it was beyond his understanding.

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Whatever he looks like I am sure we also would be terrified and pass out if we saw him. This is the Gabriel who comes to visit in the NT.

Gabriel had visited Daniel before and had given him a view of what was to come. We know it as the 70 weeks of Daniel's prophecy, but Gabriel is actually the one that explains it to him in Daniel 9. A careful reading underscores the time of the Tribulation and the Desolation in the middle of the 7 years of the "last" week of the prophecy (Each week is 7 years).

This is all interesting but why does it matter and why are you telling us this today? **Good question.**

I am not suggesting we take off on a study of angels. There is too much mythology and misinformation already in the public square about them. ***I am telling you this for two reasons primarily –***

The first reason is that it is Biblical and prophetic. It adds context to the study of God's Word and provides some additional ways for each of us to become a deeper disciple of the Lord and His Word. My calling...and I believe it is a calling...is to be a Bible Teacher. I view my role is to teach what the Bible says and make sure whoever I teach understands and sees that I totally believe in the absolute truth of God's Word. I never want to take the sacred things of God and cheapen them or teach you something I am only half-hearted about. I have made mention of Vicki and I being "Watchmen on the wall" in the context of Ezekiel Ch 33. We also feel called to look out and tell you when things are happening. I am doing this today.

The second reason is that the Christmas Story that is in the public square is pretty shallow and supports the view that this is simply a traditional belief. This is the way many people think about Christmas and the Birth of Christ...just a "story"...*one of many "stories" in the Bible.*

I tell you this because a few weeks ago, Pastor Jim made quick reference to the "hilariousness" of these visits by angels to men and women, and likened the Christmas Story to a Fairy Tale in that it was something that was in question by men. If you actually read these verses, you will quickly understand that they were prophecies that either have come true or will come true. Each person who was visited by an Angel was terrified and nearly dumbstruck. The Angel makes specific mention of "Do not be afraid" and then imparts the Holy message of God to the person. I see no hilarity in them whatsoever. Gabriel even strikes Zechariah mute for not believing him. I see joy in the long term but the events as they happened had to make each of them shaken over what was to come.

If one superficially reads scripture or does not place the events in the full context revealed by God in His Word there can be skepticism and unbelief. I believe all of God's Word is connected and no verse stands in isolation by itself. It is a book that is worthy of our study and understanding. I never want to leave you with an impression otherwise. I am sure the Pastor did not mean to leave the impression that the Christmas Story was a Fairy Tale, or that the visits by Angels were just a funny part of God's humor, but I want to nail that down for you.

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I have a handout that I will bring next week as we talk about Christmas that lays out the prophecies of the first coming and the “rest of the story” that we never get at Christmas. Hopefully then you will understand and see where the dots connect. I will give you the first part of it today so you can read ahead, but mainly so you will have this reference for further study.

I know we have gotten a little off target today but I also feel as a watcher of the times, it is important to bring to you issues that I see that need addressing. As I mentioned last week, the Book of Ezekiel has already been taught by me recently in a chapter and verse fashion, so you can see some of the key prophecies in whatever detail you want to study them.

Two of the key prophecies, in particular, are the ones that deal with the rebirth of Israel in Ezekiel 37 (Dry Bones) and the war of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel Ch 38 & 39) on Israel that is to take place in the Tribulation period. The Dry Bones prophecy is one we and Israel are in the midst of now. The country has been reconstituted in the Holy Land, and the people are coming home to Israel. The country is standing up and progressing. Flesh and strength growing, and they are awaiting the “breath” of life or the Holy Spirit of God to be in-breathed into them. This will fully happen in the Tribulation.

The Gog and Magog war is the one that predicts that Magog (Russia) will make alliances with Persia (Iran) and Togarmah (Turkey) and Assyria (Syria) and that the leader of Magog, which is Gog, the Prince of Rosh (leader of Russia) will gather troops to make war. Sounds a little like what is happening now in the Middle East, don't you think? These present alliances are ones that have not taken place before and it just a little curious that they are taking place at the exact time so many other prophetic signs are coming to pass.

I know we are all presently focused on America, and the new administration. We wonder what the future will bring and is there a revival on the horizon for America and its people. I know we will all do our part to make it so, at least as far as we can personally accomplish it.

BUT...Israel is God's timepiece to the future. We need to watch, learn, understand what the Bible says, and see HIS STORY unfold before us.

This week, take a look with your Bible at the prophecies and their fulfillment of the First Advent. We will cover a lot of ground next week since it will be our Christmas Lesson for 2016.