

UNDERSTANDING  
BIBLE  
PROPHECY  
FOR YOURSELF

TIM LAHAYE



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS

EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NIV are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Verses marked KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Cover by *Dugan Design Group, Bloomington, Minnesota*

Cover photos © *Digital Stock; Gazelle Technologies*

TIM LAHAYE PROPHECY LIBRARY is a series trademark of Tim F. LaHaye and Beverly J. LaHaye. Harvest House Publishers, Inc., is the exclusive licensee of the trademark TIM LAHAYE PROPHECY LIBRARY.

## UNDERSTANDING BIBLE PROPHECY FOR YOURSELF

Copyright © 2002/2009 by Tim LaHaye

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

[www.harvesthousepublishers.com](http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

LaHaye, Tim F.

[How to study Bible prophecy for yourself]

Understanding Bible Prophecy for Yourself / Tim LaHaye.

p. cm.—(Tim LaHaye prophecy library)

Originally published: How to study Bible prophecy for yourself. ©1990.

ISBN: 978-0-7369-2538-9

1. Bible—Prophecies. 2. Bible—Study and teaching. I.Title.

BS647.3.L34 2002

22.1'5'071—dc21

2001038511

**All rights reserved.** No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 /ML-SK/ 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# CONTENTS

The Urgency .....	7
1. A New Way to Study Prophecy .....	11
2. Why Christians Should Study Prophecy .....	15
3. The Certainty of Christ's Second Coming .....	23
4. Two Second Comings or One? .....	33
5. The Tribulation that Separates the Phases .....	51
6. The Tribulation, the Heart of the Book of Revelation ..	59
7. The Merciful Acts of God in Revelation .....	81
8. The Rapture Before the Tribulation? .....	91
9. The Church Is Distinct from Israel .....	99
10. Why Studying Bible Prophecy Is So Important .....	109
11. Christians Will Be Saved from the Wrath .....	115
12. Not Really So Obscure .....	119
13. Our Lord's Outline of Prophecy .....	131
14. The Glorious Appearing .....	145
15. The Christian Resurrection from the Dead .....	151
16. When Resurrected Christians Meet Their Lord .....	163
17. The Coming Kingdom of Christ .....	193
18. Where the Dead Are Now .....	209
19. The Great White Throne Judgment .....	223
20. The Best Is Yet to Come .....	237
Drawing Nearer to Christ's Return .....	241

# A NEW WAY TO STUDY PROPHECY

**Y**ou are about to embark on an exciting but sometimes controversial area of Bible study—one that could change your life. Prophecy sometimes becomes controversial because there are so many different opinions about it. Most of the controversies have to do with the timing of the Lord's return or the interpretation of the signs related to His return. Rather than risk being labeled “controversial,” some Bible teachers rarely or never teach prophecy, even though it occupies nearly one-third of all Scripture.

A popular Bible teacher taught his congregation the entire New Testament book by book, from Matthew to Jude. After he finished, he started again at the book of Matthew. One of his students interrupted him and said, “You have forgotten the book of Revelation” (an entire book of prophecy). The teacher responded, “Oh, it's too controversial and too difficult to understand.” Nonsense! Revelation 1:3 promises a blessing to those who read and obey the book of Revelation. And how can you get a blessing out of it if you can't understand it? God in His graciousness has given us prophecy, which is essentially history written in advance. The study of the end times, or eschatology as it's referred to, will not only inspire us but prepare us for the events of the last days.

This is not the time in history to avoid “the study of future things.” If we avoid teaching Christians the basics about prophecy, they will be “tossed to and fro” (Ephesians 4:14) by false teachers

who come to them with cunningly devised fables and interpretations that will deceive them. And if our expectations are correct, that increase of false teachers has already arrived on the scene and will continue in the days to come. Christians need to know *more* about prophecy, not less, so that they can be armed with the truth and defend themselves against erroneous teachings.

## It Is Possible to Understand Bible Prophecy

It is this author's conviction, after studying prophecy for many years and after writing several books on the subject (including a commentary on the book of Revelation), that prophecy is not so difficult to understand that it should be avoided. Instead, avoiding it could be dangerous to the spiritual health of Christians. The apostle Paul obviously thought prophecy was important for young Christians to study, for he addressed it in every chapter in the little book of 1 Thessalonians. (Bible scholars tell us this five-chapter book was probably the very first of his 13 epistles to be written, and that Paul had ministered in Thessalonica for only three weeks, yet obviously had taught many prophetic things during that short time.) In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 we read:

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness (NIV).

Obviously Paul did not think that such a subject as "the day of the Lord" (another reference to the second coming of Christ) was too complex for these baby Christians. The fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians, which we will study later, contains the most detailed description of the coming of Christ for His church to be found in the whole Bible. Then in 2 Thessalonians, which was written just a short time later, Paul taught about the coming of the Antichrist and

other future events. Paul clearly did not think that future subjects were too controversial or so hard to understand that they should be ignored. Instead, he considered them important for young believers, and especially essential to challenging Christians to live holy lives in an unholy age.

Some details of prophecy are admittedly difficult to understand, but the essentials are not. And that is why this book is written—to help you see through your own study that such subjects as the return of our Lord, the resurrection of the dead, the future activities of the dead (including the judgment seat of Christ for Christians only and the white throne judgment for sinners only), the millennial kingdom, heaven, and the glorious appearing of Christ to rule and reign over this earth are just not that hard to understand.

I am convinced that even if some minor misunderstandings result from the pursuit of prophetic studies, this is still far better than ignoring the subject entirely. Ignorance has never been a virtue! As the apostle Paul said, “I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). I share that concern. I would not have you ignorant about the most important events God has planned for your future. For if you understand His plan, it will motivate you to live the kind of life that will cause Him to say to you on judgment day, “Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Lord” (Matthew 25:23).

## What Makes This Book Different?

Most books on prophecy, including some of mine, are written by one or more authors for the purpose of persuading you of their own interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures. However, the purpose of this book is to help you analyze the prophetic passages of the New Testament (and those from the Old Testament that have a bearing on them) in such a way that you can come to your own conclusions. Scripture texts will be given with space available for you to write your understanding of the passages. Questions will be asked to help you reach your own conclusions. In this way, God can speak to you directly on the subject. Then *after* you have reached your conclusion on what you believe the text teaches, I will provide my understanding of it for comparison. In some cases I will also give other interpretations by Bible-believing Christians for you to consider.

Keep in mind that the Bible was not written to divide Christians, even though it has sometimes been used that way. (In some instances, whole denominations have been started over differences related to Bible prophecy.) The Bible was written to ordinary people like you and me, and most passages are easy to understand and believe if we apply the golden rule of interpretation to the passage: *When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.* As the apostle John said in Scripture about Christians understanding God's Word for themselves:

These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him (1 John 2:26-27).

If you are a Christian, you can understand the Bible, including the prophetic passages, and especially those verses that God designed to motivate His children to live holy lifestyles. Our Lord promised, "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13).

But first, let's examine *why Christians should study prophecy*.