

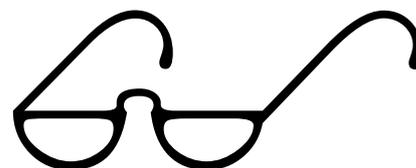
# The Right Approach to Biblical Prophecy

For some years now I have been very concerned about biblical prophecy, it's inaccuracy and being the cause of doom and gloom<sup>1</sup> among Christians. By biblical prophecy I mean the theological interpretation of prophecy in the Bible. Why concerned? I'm concerned because 'every man and his dog' thinks they have the full understanding (they call it "the truth") of what OT and NT prophecies mean. With such a wide range in their interpretations of the same passages,<sup>2</sup> and everyone of them believing their interpretation is God's truth, the situation is quite ridiculous. No wonder outsiders have very little regard for church teaching.

This variation in interpretations of biblical prophecy comes from five main sources:

1. Failing to interpret prophecies within their context
2. Failing to interpret prophecies according to what the receivers understood them to mean
3. Linking unrelated prophecies
4. Believing prophecies have an immediate message for the audience and an additional long-term statement about End Times
5. Their theology, especially their eschatology

Probably my biggest concern is how Futurist Eschatology creates a theological view that interprets a large number of OT and NT prophecies as belonging to the period before the King returns (the parousia) which we call 'End Times' or 'The Last days'. Their tunnel vision is so obvious that it's actually plain for all to see – provided you don't have the same eschatological bias (theology).



*Futurist glasses*

Here's a simple example of how Futurist Eschatology 'colours' the interpretation of prophecies in the Bible. It relates to Jesus' remarks about Elijah coming first. We'll examine it with non-Futurist glasses on and note what we see.

**Matthew 17:10** (NKJV) – *And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"*

Most Bible teachers reference Malachi as the source of the scribes' belief that Elijah comes first.

**Malachi 4:5** (NKJV) – *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*

Jesus replied to his disciple's question about Elijah this way:

**Matthew 17:11** (NKJV) – *"He answered, "Elijah does come,<sup>3</sup> and he will restore all things."<sup>4</sup>*

All good so far. Pretty straightforward.

But here's where it gets speculative. Because Futurist Eschatology labels "the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord"<sup>5</sup> as a statement about Christ's return when he dispenses punishment on the inhabitants of the Earth, Malachi 4 is shifted into the Last Days and the parousia.

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1 – e.g. "If Our Task is Positive, Why the Negativity"

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/If-Our-Task-is-Positive-Why-The-Negativity.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/If-Our-Task-is-Positive-Why-The-Negativity.pdf)

2 – The book of Revelation is the prime example. Also the Pre-, Post- & Amillennial debate.

3 – NU omits *first* (see footnote #2 below)

4 – For an accurate translation of the Greek: "And Jesus answering said to them, 'Elijah indeed comes first and shall restore all things'"  
Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (George Berry, 1897)

5 – Malachi 4:5

The move to End Times is bolstered by reference to the 2 prophets ('witnesses') in Revelation<sup>6</sup> who are believed to be Elijah and Moses reincarnated. I say 'believed' because they are not named in Revelation and nothing in the book alludes to their identity either. The belief that they are Elijah and Moses basically comes from the incident<sup>7</sup> on Mt Hermon (right next to ancient Caesarea Philippi). Again, I emphasise that there is no incontrovertible evidence that Elijah will return in person as per Revelation 11.

There are numerous references to 'The Day of the Lord' in the Bible so it is possible to work out what the reference to it in Malachi 4 is all about.

There are many references to The Day of the Lord in the OT where God brought warnings to the Israelites through the prophets. You'll find a list of 18 of these on the last page of these notes. When read, all these verses are referring to God's judgement of the Israelite people because of their sin in turning away from him. This was eventually fulfilled with the attack of Assyrians (740BC) and the Babylonians (587BC).

There are two NT verses of note:

- Acts 2:20 – "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."
- 1 Corinthians 5:5 – "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus<sup>8</sup>."

Acts 2 is Peter quoting Joel 2 to the assembled Jews on the 'Day of Pentecost' when the Spirit was released to the *ekklesia*. Peter said that the event in Acts 2 was a fulfilment of the prophecy in Joel 2. If that's the case, then The Day of the Lord in Joel 2 must refer to the same Pentecost event. If not, the prophecy in Joel 2 is incoherent. Following the line of the OT references to The Day of the Lord, the Acts 2 citation must refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans in 70AD and 135AD – a time of Judgement for national sin. The Day of the Lord here doesn't appear to logically refer to a time in the future.

1 Corinthians 5 refers to a time of the Lord's return ("the day of the Lord Jesus") when he will judge the inhabitants of Earth. It is referring to the parousia and Judgement.

Let's check some more background and see where it leads. Please note that this is usually left out of Futurist analyses.

Jesus continued to expand on his reply to the disciples, and this is what's recorded:

**Matthew 17:12-13** (NKJV) – *But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.*

Now that throws a different light on Elijah's coming.

"Elijah has come already". Can that be any plainer? Who was Elijah then? "John the Baptist" of course. This is an important understanding because, before he was born, an angel revealed that he would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah"<sup>9</sup>.

So, **Malachi 4 is referring to the coming of the Messiah – i.e. the first coming of the Son, not his second.**

That means "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" refers to the Son ('the Lord') coming at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD, not a time in the future when he will judge all things<sup>10</sup>.

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6 – Revelation 11:1-14

7 – Matthew 17:1-8

8 – NU omits *Jesus*

9 – Luke 1:13-17

10 – Matthew 25:31-46

Why would it be a terrible day back then? Because he judged the Jews<sup>11</sup> and found them guilty.<sup>12</sup> This was the third and final time God judged Israel & Judah. Following this, they were destroyed by the Romans and their city and temple razed. Definitely a “great and dreadful day” for the Jews. The Son of God had come and Father judged the nation, executing his judgement in 70AD and 135AD where the Jews were either exterminated or driven out of their land to the many nations of the world.

Those who don't hold the supersessionist understanding the New Covenant (NC) will not agree with my last paragraph. They don't believe that the *ekklesia* (spiritual Israel) replaced the Jews (physical Israel) as God's focus in the NC. This theology causes them to have a bias in interpreting biblical prophecy so that a lot of it is shifted into the Last Days.

Is what I've outlined been a wrong interpretation? No. It's pretty consistent with the biblical text. Of course, it's only my interpretation.

But wait, there's more. Take a look at this further reference in Malachi:

**Malachi 3:1-2** (AMP) – *Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will prepare and clear the way before Me. And the Lord [the Messiah], whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap [which removes impurities and uncleanness]*

In verse 1, the first 'messenger' is John the Baptist who prepared and cleared the way for the Messiah. The second 'messenger' is the Messiah himself, God's messenger bringing the message of the New Covenant.

Now, notice verse 2: “who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap [which removes impurities and uncleanness]”. Doesn't this have shades of the “great and dreadful day of the Lord”? Yes, Jesus came and cleaned up the religious 'harlotry' of the Jews. He even went so far as to bring in a different covenant which he gave to different people<sup>13</sup> following his removal of the Abrahamic covenant (representing the Kingdom of God) from them.

Another thing about Elijah's 'coming'. Placing him in the wrong time zone (i.e. when Jesus returns) puts a wrong interpretation on the restoration of all things. Check this statement by Paul:

**Acts 3:19-21** (NKJV) – *“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ<sup>14</sup>, who was preached to you before<sup>15</sup>, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world<sup>16</sup> began.”*

If we interpret this verse in isolation from what Jesus completely achieve<sup>17</sup>, we come up with a different timeline. How come? With a Futurist view of scripture, “until the times of restoration of all things” means when Jesus returns and sets up his Millennial Reign. But...Jesus said that Elijah had already come “and he will restore all things”.

What we see then is that when John the Baptist came he set things in motion (prophetically, so to speak) so that when Jesus came and reintroduced the Kingdom of Heaven to Earth, the 'train' was set in motion for everything to be restored over a period of time. Paul, in Acts 3, would most probably be referring to the Kingdom's expansion process taking over the globe as time went on, and then Jesus would return. This is different to thinking he meant that Jesus would hang around in Heaven until he's ready and then everything will be restored when he returned.

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11 – John 8:26

12 – Matthew 24:1-2 (1-14)

13 – Matthew 21:43

14 – NU, M *Christ Jesus*

15 – NU, M *ordained for you before*

16 – Or *time*

17 – Not just salvation

What I've outlined is a very different eschatology and it actually lines up with what the Spirit has been releasing to us these days.<sup>18</sup> However, those with a Futurist Eschatology are violently opposed to restoration happening by God working through humans NOW. The interesting thing will be: Who ends up aligning with Heaven's plans for The End and who doesn't? This is why you don't want to be "left behind" – by not keeping pace with Father's plans for Earth.

**Conclusion:** What I've presented here is a coherent interpretation of Elijah and 'The Day of The Lord'. It is devoid (I believe) of the interference of Futurist Eschatology. The way ahead is glorious for the sons of the Living God, despite the opposition from the kingdom of darkness.

**Note:** Taking the opposing view of Elijah coming before the Lord (i.e. he comes at The End), we find some very interesting interpretations. Here's just one:

*"There was a man who fulfilled this preparatory role in the end time. A man who did "restore all things". That man was Herbert W. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong restored all the fundamental doctrines of God's truth to the true Church of God over the course of his 57-year ministry. And in the last few years of his long life, he came to recognize, based on the fruits, that he had fulfilled this prophesied role."*<sup>19</sup>

What do you think?

Laurence

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18 – e.g. Henry Joseph Falcone (10-6-2018) "MESSAGE: Awakening Kingdom Glory!"

([canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Awakening-Kingdom-Glory-Falcone.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Awakening-Kingdom-Glory-Falcone.pdf))

Ron McGatlin (28-6-2018) "Explosive Change is Coming"

([canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Explosive-Change-is-Coming-McGatlin.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Explosive-Change-is-Coming-McGatlin.pdf))

19 – Joel Hilliker (11-7-2018) "A sign of Jesus Christ's return you must not ignore" [in 'The Trumpet', Philadelphia Church of God]

([www.thetrumpet.com/17486-are-we-in-the-end-time-this-pivotal-end-time-prophecy-shows-yes](http://www.thetrumpet.com/17486-are-we-in-the-end-time-this-pivotal-end-time-prophecy-shows-yes))

# OT References to ‘The Day of the Lord’

*(Quotes are of the NKJV from BibleGateway.com)*

Isaiah 2:12

For the **day of the Lord** of hosts *Shall come* upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up  
— And it shall be brought low—

Isaiah 13:6

Wail, for the **day of the Lord** *is* at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Isaiah 13:9

Behold, the **day of the Lord** comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate;  
And He will destroy its sinners from it.

Jeremiah 46:10

For this *is* the **day of the Lord** God of hosts, A day of vengeance, That He may avenge Himself on His  
adversaries. The sword shall devour; It shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; For the Lord  
God of hosts has a sacrifice In the north country by the River Euphrates.

Ezekiel 13:5

You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the **day of  
the Lord**.

Ezekiel 30:3

For the day *is* near, Even the **day of the Lord** *is* near; It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles.

Joel 1:15

Alas for the day! For the **day of the Lord** *is* at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.

Joel 2:1

Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land  
tremble; For the **day of the Lord** is coming, For it is at hand:

Joel 2:11

The Lord gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong *is the One* who executes  
His word. For the **day of the Lord** *is* great and very terrible; Who can endure it?

Joel 2:31

The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and  
awesome **day of the Lord**.

Joel 3:14

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the **day of the Lord** *is* near in the valley of decision.

Amos 5:18

Woe to you who desire the **day of the Lord**! For what good *is* the **day of the Lord** to you? *It will be*

darkness, and not light.

Amos 5:20

*Is not the **day of the Lord** darkness, and not light? *Is it not* very dark, with no brightness in it?*

Obadiah 1:15

“For the **day of the Lord** upon all the nations *is* near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.

Zephaniah 1:7

Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; For the **day of the Lord** *is* at hand, For the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests.

Zephaniah 1:14

The great **day of the Lord** *is* near; *It is* near and hastens quickly. The noise of the **day of the Lord** is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out.

Zechariah 14:1

Behold, the **day of the Lord** is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst.

Malachi 4:5

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful **day of the Lord**.