The Centrality of Jesus in Prophecy

A New Testament Perspective

Introduction

The interpretation of biblical prophecy is a subject of considerable debate among Christians. Many evangelicals today adopt an Israel-based interpretation of prophecy, focusing heavily on the role of Israel in end-time events. However, this perspective is fundamentally flawed. Biblical prophecy is, at its core, centered on Jesus Christ, and understanding the Old Testament correctly necessitates interpreting it through the lens of the New Testament. The culmination of the old covenant and the ushering in of the new covenant in 70 AD, marked by the destruction of the temple, signified a pivotal shift in God's plan, emphasizing Jesus as the ultimate and final sacrifice for sins and extending salvation to the Gentiles.

The Role of the New Testament in Interpreting the Old Testament

The New Testament provides a clear and definitive interpretation of Old Testament prophecies. Jesus Himself emphasized this in Luke 24:27 (KJV): "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Here, Jesus explains that the entirety of the Old Testament points to Him. The apostle Paul reiterates this in Romans 15:4 (KJV): "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."

Understanding the Old Testament through the New Testament

reveals that many prophecies previously thought to be about Israel were actually about Christ and His redemptive work. The writer of Hebrews confirms this in Hebrews 10:1 (KJV): “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.” The Old Testament sacrifices were merely shadows pointing to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus.

The End of the Old Covenant with Christ’s Sacrifice

The old covenant ended with Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross. This event marked the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:17 (KJV): “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” Through His death and resurrection, Jesus established a new covenant, as described in Hebrews 9:15 (KJV): “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

The Ultimate Fulfillment in 70 AD

Although the old covenant formally ended with Jesus’ death, the final judgment on Israel’s continued rejection of the Messiah and their adherence to the old sacrificial system was realized in 70 AD with the destruction of the temple. This event fulfilled Daniel’s prophecy in Daniel 9:26-27 (KJV): *“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week* ***he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease****, and for the*

overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Jesus had foretold this destruction as a consequence of Israel's rejection of Him, their Messiah. In Matthew 24:2 (KJV), He said, *"There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."* The destruction of the temple in 70 AD symbolized the end of the old covenant practices and the affirmation of Jesus' ultimate sacrifice.

The common dispensational premillennialist interpretation claims that the 70th week is a future event. However, the text of Daniel 9 does not support this view. Instead, it indicates that the final week runs concurrently with the other events. The "he" in Daniel 9:27 refers to the Messiah, who confirms the covenant during His ministry. The *"midst of the week"* aligns with the three and a half years of Jesus' public ministry, culminating in His crucifixion, which caused the sacrificial system to cease in its spiritual efficacy.

Salvation Extended to the Gentiles

With the end of the old covenant and the rejection of the Jewish sacrificial system, salvation was extended to the Gentiles, allowing them to be grafted into God's people. Paul explains this beautifully in Romans 11:17 (KJV): "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." This inclusion of the Gentiles was part of God's plan from the beginning, as hinted in the Old Testament and clarified in the New Testament.

The apostle Peter also highlights this transition in Acts 10:34-35 (KJV): "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." The gospel's reach to the Gentiles

signifies the breaking down of the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, making one new people in Christ.

Conclusion

The focus of biblical prophecy should always be Jesus Christ, not the nation of Israel. The New Testament provides the key to understanding the Old Testament, revealing that all prophecies and promises find their fulfillment in Christ. The destruction of the temple in 70 AD marked the ultimate judgment on Israel’s unbiblical worship practices and the end of the old covenant, emphasizing Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice for sin. This event also highlighted the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s redemptive plan. As believers, it is essential to interpret prophecy with a Christ-centered approach, ensuring that our understanding is aligned with the full revelation of Scripture.

By embracing this perspective, we can appreciate the unity and coherence of God’s redemptive plan throughout the Bible, recognizing that Jesus is indeed the focal point of all prophecy. As Revelation 19:10 (KJV) declares, “for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”