

The God of Prophecy

If you've ever read *The Purpose Driven Life*¹ you may have encountered this passage:

When the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation to evangelism. He wanted them to concentrate on their mission in the world. He said in essence, "The details of my return are none of your business. What is your business is the mission I have given you. Focus on that!" (The Purpose Driven Life, p. 285)

That statement is wrong. Jesus didn't do that *even one time*. Don't take my word for it though – see for yourself! Let's take a look at a time when Christ's disciples did ask Him about prophetic matters:

Matthew 24:3: "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

Now if you believed Rick Warren, you'd expect Jesus to say "Look, guys, don't worry about it. Just focus on preaching the gospel and everything will be fine." But if you read the very next verse you'll discover that Jesus didn't say anything remotely like that. Instead He said this:

1 A book I definitely do not recommend reading!

Matthew 24:4: “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.”

Jesus then spent the *entire rest of the chapter* talking about matters relating to end-times prophecy – *and He continued the discussion through the entirety of the next chapter as well!* So instead of telling His disciples “Hey, all that end-times stuff is none of your business!”, Jesus actually spent two entire chapters of Matthew talking about it. Two entire chapters! Let’s also not overlook the fact that the entire book of Revelation is a revelation *from Jesus Christ* that He gave to His church so that we would be aware of prophetic end-times events (Revelation 1:1-3). If Jesus truly thought that it was “none of our business” do you think He would have given us an entire book of the New Testament dedicated to it?

Jesus did *not* want His disciples to be ignorant of prophetic matters. In fact, He actually commanded them to be knowledgeable about them so they wouldn't be deceived. His big concern was that false teachers would come along and tell lies, and people would believe those lies and be deceived. Jesus wanted His followers to understand end-times prophecy. In fact, He wanted His followers to be constantly watching for His return. In Mark 13 He repeatedly commanded His disciples to be alert:

Mark 13:32-37: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the

morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.”

Rick Warren would have you believe that Jesus didn't want you to be thinking about His return. He claimed that Jesus went around telling people “It's none of your business”. The real Jesus, however, was quite different. He *commanded* His disciples to think about His return and to be watching for it with great alertness!

Now, there was one time when the disciples asked a question about prophecy which Jesus didn't answer. We can find that in the book of Acts:

Acts 1:6-7: “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”

The disciples wanted to know the exact date when all of these prophecies would be fulfilled – and Jesus told them that wasn't for them to know. Jesus wanted His disciples to watch for His return, not to mark an exact date on their calendar! But He definitely didn't discourage them from studying prophecy.

Some people in the church teach that prophecy isn't very important, and the right thing to do is to live our lives and wait for everything to “pan out” (a position sometimes known as “pan-millennialism”). That attitude isn't biblical and doesn't honor God. It's not a good idea to tell God “I don't really care what you have to say about prophecy, so I'm going to ignore it.”

I urge you to avoid being pan-millennial. Do *not* take a “who cares?” approach to prophecy – or to any Bible doctrine, for that matter! The “who cares?” attitude is exactly why Jesus condemned the church at Laodicea. Our Lord wants us to care

about everything He taught – and that includes prophecy.