

**Message #79 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface***  
***“Understanding End-time Prophecy - Part 1”***

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to start a topic which I call, “Understanding End-time Prophecy.” This topic will be presented in several parts, and will focus on the underlying principles of symbolic explanation that the Bible uses, as well as the different prophecies themselves. Because the book of Revelation affects current day Christianity more than any other book of the Bible, we will focus on it more than the other books. In this series of messages we will specifically cover the beasts of Revelation 13, as well as the mark of the beast and the image of the beast, in that chapter. We will be talking about what the beast is, how the beast was developed, what the impact of the beast is on people today, and what it means for you. In order for you to understand this series of messages, you will need revelation knowledge. I can't give that to you. Only the Holy Spirit can guide you into the truth of God. It is only through God's spirit that revelation knowledge comes.

Our current end-time church needs revelation knowledge. The word Revelation comes from the root word, ‘reveal’. Revelation is a ‘revealing’. Sometimes Christians don't realize that God wants to reveal his plans for end time events. But he does. He wants us to know what is coming. He wants to warn us of the dangerous deception that Satan is bringing to the church in these last days in order that we might escape destruction and be ready and waiting for Jesus when he comes in the clouds of heaven. However, the warning messages of prophecy have little value if not understood. It is important to heed the message of prophecy, but Christians cannot do this if they aren't instructed.

Although end-time prophecy is taught by many evangelists, most church pastors do not preach the warning messages. They seem to expect the people to get all their understanding from TV or radio ministers. How sad that the shepherds of God's people so often fall short of instructing the people, and the people perish because their eyes have no vision. They perish from lack of understanding because they have no guidance to keep them on the straight and narrow path. And although bookshelves are overloaded with commentaries on prophecy, there still remains the problem of misinformation from those who teach it, or from the complete lack of teaching it at all.

Also, another problem is that most teachers of current end-time prophecy tend to use facts and logic to discern the scriptures, rather than relying on the Holy Spirit. To those who rely on facts and logic, the end result of their endeavor will be a physical or literal interpretation. However, only those who realize the importance of the *underlying symbolism* of scripture will be able to comprehend prophecy to any great extent. Those who truly seek God, and pray for knowledge and understanding, to them will the Holy Spirit reveal the hidden mysteries. It is these people, the ones who fervently pray for God's revelation by his Holy Spirit, who will understand. And when they do, then they will be able to teach others, just as the Bible promises. So, as you listen to this series of messages, try to understand that what I say isn't just a logical assumption of current end time prophetic events, but a result of much study, prayer, and a desire to look beneath the surface at God's revealing word.

As we talk of these end time prophetic scriptures, keep in mind that you will not understand the symbolic things of Revelation, or Old Testament prophecy, unless you're ready to search beneath the surface. It's like digging for gold. If you want to find gold, you usually don't look around on top of the ground. Gold is generally found beneath the surface of the earth. It's the same thing when it comes to finding hidden treasure in God's word. This does not mean that you have to throw away all the surface concepts either. It doesn't mean that there are no physical events which will take place in these last days. But if you will temporarily set aside the completely physical explanations of scripture that you have been taught in the past, and look at some concepts which God describes in a symbolic fashion, then you will see what lies under the surface covering. After this you can go back and compare the two layers of information and finally build a more accurate picture of that which God wants to show you. But you will have to suppress your initial tendency to reject that which is below the surface when it seems to be contrary to what you already know, because the two views of prophecy, the symbolic and the physical, only go together and make sense when you see both sides, or should we say, both levels, of the picture. If you really want the good stuff, then you're going to have to dig for it, for God has determined that only those who truly want to see, and those who will diligently search for it, will find it. Let me give you an example.

In Matthew 16:6-7, it says, "Then Jesus said to them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. 7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread." The disciples of Jesus reacted to his parable by looking at the surface. He said leaven, and they automatically assumed that he was talking about bread. After all, you put

leaven in bread, don't you? To the disciples of Jesus, it seemed to be a logical conclusion. After all, they were intelligent people. They knew enough about making bread. They weren't stupid or anything. But Jesus explained to them that he wasn't talking about bread, but about the *doctrine* of the Pharisees. The words of Jesus were in the form of a parable. The true meaning was hidden within the words Jesus used. The words he used were symbolic, and their meaning was not meant to be taken literally, not just in a completely physical way, but the disciples were expected to perceive the actual meaning, which was hidden within the spoken symbolic words. What the disciples needed to know is that the key words were represented conceptually, in symbolic terms, rather than literally. When the disciples recognized the meaning of the key words Jesus was speaking, then they could recognize what Jesus was actually saying. They could then see that Jesus was revealing something spiritual to them instead of just talking about bread. Understanding the significance of the key words which Jesus spoke would *reveal* something to them that was not apparent on the surface. Yet, it was something just as real as if he had spoken it plainly. In fact, Jesus did speak it plainly after the disciples inquired of him as to what he meant. This shows us that just because something is conceptual, and given in symbolic terms, does not mean it has no reality. Many things in scripture are given in symbolic terms, in order to describe a heavenly meaning. And because of this, only those who hear with spiritual ears will understand. That's why the Bible so often says, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear."

The true meaning that Jesus wanted his disciples to understand was that they should be careful when listening to the Pharisees because the Pharisees' doctrine was full of errors. To put it plainly, their doctrine was full of lies and deception. The word 'leaven' that Jesus had used, was a symbolic term that stood for 'doctrinal lies'. It is this same concept of recognizing the meaning of symbolic terms in scripture which gives God's people, "eyes to see, and ears to hear." And, it is when God's people can see the hidden meaning of scripture that deception is taken away. Surely, Proverbs 29:18 is true, when it tells us that the people perish when there is lack of vision. But when the eyes of God's people are opened through the revelation of God's Holy Spirit, then the same people are able to escape from any threatening danger. To understand Biblical knowledge is not just a result of reading the Bible at face value. To clearly understand the Bible, we need to also recognize the use of symbolic terminology when it is used. Otherwise, we will be like blind people, and blind people have no defense against the enemy.

When the apostles asked Jesus why he taught in parables, he responded by saying that it was for the purpose of keeping those who were wicked from understanding, lest they should hear with their spiritual ears and understand, and as a consequence, he would have to forgive them when they repented, and would have to heal their land. In essence, he was telling them that he did not want the Pharisees to understand. What he wanted was for the righteous to understand.

Jesus knew that the heart of the righteous would receive the leading of the Holy Spirit. He also knew that because the righteous had hearts which were unhardened by the world, and open to the true things of God, that they would understand, if only they took just enough time to think about what was being said, and to let the hidden meaning come to the surface of their minds. But it would take the principle of 'contemplating', or 'pausing to think about it', before they could

understand. That's why King David, writing in the Psalms, so often said the word, 'Selah'. Selah means to 'pause and think about this'. David was a man of understanding. He knew that the deep things of God had to be considered deeply in order to bring out the full essence of the thought.

In the time of Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees, generally, were so selfish, so prideful, so greedy of gain and glory for themselves, that they had no true relationship with God. If they had, they would have recognized God when they saw and heard Jesus. They asked him to reveal the Father, but when he replied by saying, "You're looking at Him," they still couldn't see the Father when they looked at Jesus because they were looking through physical eyes, rather than through their spiritual eyes. God is a spirit, and unless God reveals himself to mankind in the physical realm, he cannot be seen with physical eyes. Even Jesus, as the image and glory of God on the earth, could not reveal the Father to the scribes and Pharisees because the wickedness within their hearts had blocked the truth from coming through. If we are going to see God, then we have to be able to see with spiritual eyes, and not just with logic and diagnostic tools.

And just a note here for you experienced Bible scholars. Diagnostic tools for the interpretation of scripture, which is called 'critical exegesis', can only work to bring to order that which is already discerned. The reason for this is that you will use a certain diagnostic tool to apply to a certain type of fact. But what if the fact is not fully understood yet? The result will be that you will interpret incorrectly, because the tool will only interpret according to known values. It is better to trust God's promise of the Holy Spirit guiding you into all truth, than to trust a set of rules. Critical exegesis is a good way to look at the surface of scripture, but not a very good tool for digging into underlying symbolic meaning.

Now let me give you another example of a hidden meaning. In Matthew 6:3, Jesus gives us the parable concerning the giving of offerings. It says, "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does." Now this is an interesting parable. It is extremely difficult to take this parable at absolute face value and to miss the fact that a deeper meaning is implied. As anyone can plainly see, a hand has no brain. It has no eyes to see, nor brain to comprehend what the other hand is doing. This leaves the listener without the option to take the statement at face value. That the statement is clearly a parable and requires that the listener must discern the true intent of the statement, is a fact that cannot be ignored, even for a Pharisee type of person.

We know from the scripture accompanying this parable, that Jesus was trying to tell us not to let our offerings to God become tainted by sinful fleshly motives. The Pharisees of Jesus' day would give great offerings, trying to imply that they were exceedingly righteous. However, when they made such a great outward show of their giving, it was plain, at least to those who could discern the spirits of the Pharisees, that they wanted the praise and glory of men, not the satisfaction of being obedient to God. Their pride was the factor that controlled them, and it is this same pride of life that operates from the flesh perspective of man and destroys the work of the Holy Spirit within. Mankind cannot be in the Spirit, and at the same time have his eyes

focused on the flesh. It is the same with understanding the scriptures. We must be careful not to look at everything from a human physical perspective, for the things of God are first understood by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, and then they are comprehended in the physical. There is an order to the wisdom of God. We must first comprehend God's spiritual implications, and then we can more clearly see what is taking place in our physical world.

The parable Jesus spoke, concerning the giving of tithes and offerings, was a lesson on doing what God wants us to do, and doing it for the sake of glorifying God, not for the glorification of ourselves. However, this might be a good time to look at the concept in this parable of giving and ask the question, "Why did Jesus refer to the right hand and the left hand in order to point out the difference between the actions of the flesh and the action of the spirit? If we understand this principle of the right hand and the left hand, and can understand the hidden meaning in this parable, then we will have a better perspective of how other scriptures can reveal that which is hidden to the wicked, but revealed to those who will pray earnestly and ask for understanding through the Holy Spirit. Let's look in Ecclesiastes, chapter 10, verse 2. What we see here is an interesting statement which gives us some insight into how there can be an outward physical representation and at the same time reveal a hidden perspective. Ecclesiastes 10:2 says, "A wise man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart is at his left."

This is an interesting scripture. From the external perspective, this verse indicates a wise man's heart being located at the man's right hand, and a fool's heart is located at his left hand. In a completely physical sense this verse means practically nothing by itself. If you take this verse at its plain face value, you really can't benefit much by the statement. Solomon's wisdom is not really worth much in this one small verse if you just look at the surface of the scripture and don't see the underlying meaning. However, if we look beneath the face value of this scripture, and take a look at what the individual words imply, we will see an interesting principle. In fact, this principle, found in this short little verse in Ecclesiastes 10:2, is a major principle of the Bible. No, it isn't spelled out plainly, for if it was, the wicked people of earth would understand it and they would recognize the danger they were in and then they would repent and God would have to restore them and restore their inheritance in the Lord. However, God doesn't want people to understand if their hearts are not truly toward the Lord. What God is looking for is for those like you who really want to understand, and are willing to pray and seek God for more and greater understanding, and are not afraid to trust God to reveal that greater understanding. God is looking for a people who will trust him instead of trusting in their logical techniques of scripture study. This is the difference in Christianity between the men and the boys. This is the difference between those who believe God will show them truth instead of trusting in the logic of facts.

So now, let's look at the words used in this verse, and see what King Solomon was actually referring to when he referred to the heart of the wise man being at the man's right hand. The original language of the Old Testament for 'right hand' means 'that hand which is the dominant hand, or the hand that usually takes'. The King James translators translated this as 'right' hand, in that most people are right handed. If you are left-handed, it would still mean the same thing because your left hand would then be your dominant hand, that hand which you usually use to

catch things, or to pick up things. I'll use the 'right' hand term for my explanation, in keeping with the King James style, but just remember that King Solomon was referring to a concept which is that one hand is the dominant hand over the other hand.

Now, we know that a 'right-handed' person will use their right hand more than their left hand. We also know that the right hand would be more dexterous than the left hand. A right-handed person can do many things easily with their right hand, and we also know that if they tried to do the same things with their left hand, they would be very clumsy at it. Writing, is a good example, and so is feeding yourself with a fork or spoon. When Solomon wrote the words of Ecclesiastes 10:2, he knew that people recognized the right hand as being dominant. What he also knew was that people recognized the heart of man as being equivalent to the deep seated mental and spiritual convictions. It is the heart that scripture refers to as the center core of mankind's emotions, beliefs, convictions, and intentions. It is the heart that is recognized as the place that God can inhabit or even that evil thoughts can inhabit. No, not the physical heart, but the spiritual heart. The part of man that harbors his deepest faith or his deepest wickedness. The heart of mankind is the controlling factor of man's destiny, because it is the heart of man that harbors his true feelings. And because of this important role that the heart of mankind plays in his eternal destiny, the hand that usually takes, the dominant hand, should be the hand that was assigned to the task of providing for things of the heart of man. Or, in other words, the things of man which pertain to God must be looked after to a much greater extent than things that only pertain to our fleshly lives. But, from the other perspective, the left hand, that hand which is not dominant, and is used more sparingly, should be assigned to the things that pertain to the fleshly things of this world. It should be assigned to the physical needs of man. Solomon understood the underlying principle that if a man was to be what God intended him to be, then he needed to spend more effort feeding his spirit man concerning the things of God, than in feeding his flesh with things that build up the fleshly man. Solomon's statement of the right hand and the left hand was also a parable that is only comprehended by looking beneath the surface. He was actually saying that we who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior should be occupied with our Father's business, just as Jesus was occupied with his Father's business. At least, as Solomon taught, and as Jesus confirmed, the righteous man must let the spiritual side of him be strong, and not let the flesh side of him destroy what God intends for him to be.

The Pharisees of Jesus' day were trying to show themselves as being super spiritual, but in actuality, their flesh side, symbolized by their left hand, was the active hand in the 'giving' process, rather than their right hand. The wickedness of the Pharisees was dominant. In essence, they had been feeding their fleshly man with their right hand. That hand which usually took was responsible for giving their flesh so much provision, that the flesh became dominant over their hearts. They were fleshly; they were carnal; they were worldly, instead of being led of the Spirit of God and having a healthy robust heart for God, they had ceased to be men with understanding, and had sunk to the level of animals. They could not comprehend the deep things of God for the true desire of their hearts had become weak, and the desires of their flesh had become strong. They had allowed their hearts to be maintained with their weak left hands, and had fed their fleshly desires with their strong dominant right hands. Because of this, they could not recognize their greed for self glory.

The essence of this parable is understood by recognizing the spiritual symbolism of the words Jesus used. The parable clearly demonstrates the essence of spiritual symbolism, and without the symbolic meaning, it cannot be understood. And, just as spiritual symbolism is the basis of understanding this and other parables, it is also the basis of understanding prophecy. Without recognizing the symbolic implications of scripture, we will not recognize the unfolding of our current end-time events. If we don't recognize what is really taking place in our world today, our world of tomorrow may not be to our liking, for the deception Satan brings may destroy our future. Salvation is too precious a gift for us to ignore God's word.