

There was a sense of impatience in Eve, too. She was dissatisfied that there was a prohibition on her desire to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit was “pleasant” (Heb. *ta'avah*), and “she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her” (Gen. 3:6); and not one of us escapes the consequences of that action. None since then has had access to the tree of life, for God “placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (v. 24).

“But when the desire [*ta'avah*] cometh, it is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12). Because Eve wished to satisfy her desire for the “pleasant” things, the opportunity to partake of the tree of life was removed. In God’s good time, however, to those prepared to wait, who overcome, and who endure to the end, God promises that He will “give to eat of the tree of life” (Rev. 2:7). In the garden the opportunity was retracted; in the restored “paradise of God” it is reinstated, for “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (22:14).

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise” (2 Pet. 3:9). His plan will be realised. Though some may scoff, saying, “Where is the promise . . . ?” (v. 4), when the day appointed dawns, and not a moment before, the promises will be fulfilled. A necessity for the disciple is, then, patient continuance, active waiting, a state of expectant preparedness coupled with an endurance that is not soon weakened by delay, but strengthened by the knowledge that God has said: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised” (Jer. 33:14).

Are we prepared to wait? Does hope deferred disappoint, exasperate and grieve us? Do we let the Lord’s delay change our outlook, affect our judgement? Do we find ourselves doing things which later we may regret? Let us remember the proverb and heed the appeal of James: “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain” (Jas. 5:7). By God’s grace we will then have “right to the tree of life”.

Using prophecy

A step-by-step guide

Nigel Bernard

THE FOLLOWING guide uses Matthew 24:15,16 as an example:

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains”.

Step one—read the Word

It is essential that we read prophecy, that we listen to the words that are spoken. Those in A.D. 70 who had chosen not to find out about the words that the Lord Jesus had spoken would have been oblivious to the dangers to come. There is no short-cut. We have to make ourselves familiar with prophecy.

Step two—understand the prophecy

Those who listened to, and remembered, the words of Christ would have to decide on the

interpretation. What exactly is “the abomination of desolation” of which Daniel spoke? A key to understanding prophecy is to compare scripture with scripture.

An understanding of these words can be found by comparing them with Luke’s account of the Mount Olivet Prophecy: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh” (Lk. 21:20). The desolation clearly relates, at least in part, to armies besieging Jerusalem. Those who did not understand this would have been caught unawares. It was not good enough to say, “We can’t be dogmatic”; failure to understand would mean failure to survive.

Step Three—watch for signs of fulfilment

Having understood the prophecy, there was now a need to watch for signs that it was coming to pass. We must remain separate from the world

but we must take an interest in those events in the world which relate to prophecy. A Bible student living in Judea in A.D. 70 who chose not to watch the movements of the Roman armies as they manoeuvred in the Land was in danger of being trapped. You had to be watchful in order to “see Jerusalem compassed with armies”.

Step Four—pray

As well as watching there was also a need to pray: “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day” (Mt. 24:20). This prayer relates to a specific detail about the prophecy, the need to flee. It is a prayer which is based on a correct understanding of the prophecy; as Paul wrote: “I will pray with the understanding also” (1 Cor. 14:15). When we pray about the time of the end and the return of Christ, we need to know what God intends to happen. John wrote: “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us” (1 Jno. 5:14). Prophecy shows us what “His will” is with regard to many things at the time of the end. Therefore, the more we understand about the prophecies

of the time of the end the more powerful our prayers will be.

Step Five—do the right thing

We have seen the armies gathering; now is the critical phase. As it says in Luke: “the desolation thereof is nigh”. How soon is “nigh”? We could debate this and argue for different lengths of time. This is a tempting approach. Anything that leads to delay is tempting because the alternative, to flee and leave everything behind, is against our nature. But this would be fatal. We have to “flee into the mountains” without delay.

Epilogue

Would we have escaped if we had been living in Judea in A.D. 70? The steps above may seem obvious. But would we have followed them? Well, the answer lies in our response to the prophecy about *our* time later on in Luke 21. Do we understand this prophecy? Do we know what “things” (v. 28) are going to come to pass? If we do then are we doing the right thing? Are we lifting up our heads or are we looking downwards to the things of this life, like those who would not flee in A.D. 70?

Multiple fulfilments of scripture

Tony Benson

THE MULTIPLE fulfilment of scripture is a very significant concept, which the Bible student soon becomes aware of. This article attempts to establish some principles regarding this. We use the phrase ‘multiple fulfilment’ rather than ‘dual fulfilment’ because sometimes scripture can have more than two fulfilments, and the word ‘scripture’ rather than ‘prophecy’ because a historical account, for example, can have a further application if it is typical of future events.

It is suggested that there are three ways in which prophecies can have more than one fulfilment:

- 1 prophecies that are fulfilled two or more times because the circumstances that fulfil the prophecy arise more than once;
- 2 prophecies that have their complete fulfilment in the long term but an initial fulfilment in things that are typical of the complete fulfilment;

- 3 prophecies that are fulfilled completely initially, but this fulfilment is typical of something else to come.

There is only one way to explain further what we mean by these ideas, and that is by giving examples.

1. Prophecies fulfilled whenever a given situation exists

Blessing and cursing on Israel

Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 foretell the blessings for obedience or curses for disobedience that would come upon Israel in their history, from the entry into the Land onwards. There is a wealth of quotations from and allusions to these chapters in later books of the Bible, and other occasions when situations arose which fulfilled parts of these prophecies can be discovered from secular history.