

Prophecies with Multiple References

Double or Multiple Bearing

Those who study Bible prophecy are aware that many prophetic passages have multiple references. For example, in Isaiah 7:14 we read the well-known prophecy concerning the future Messiah and rightly apply it to Jesus Christ:

“Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel [God-with-us].”

Matthew 1:22-23 explains that Jesus (God manifested in the flesh) was the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy. However, the sign given by the Lord was first directed toward wicked King Ahaz: “...the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying ‘Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God...’” (Isaiah 7:10-11. See also: Isaiah 8:1-18). The context indicates that the sign would also be applicable to Ahaz’s own time and not solely to some event 700 years in the future. By knowing the full scope of prophecy, we find that both applications have scriptural warrant and therefore a dual application is the correct interpretation.¹

The King of Tyre

Another well-known example of multiple bearing is Ezekiel’s lament over the king of Tyre. At first, God was directly addressing the king of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:1-11). Because the king of Tyre boasted that he was a god, the true God declared that he would die and be thrown down into the pit (v. 8).

However, starting in verse 12 the lamentation against the king of Tyre extended to address Satan: “Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering... You were the anointed cherub who covers...”’” (Ezekiel 28:12-14). Clearly, the king of Tyre was never an anointed cherub in Eden. Once again, a double bearing is warranted, and in this case the king of Tyre becomes a type of Satan – providing us with a flashback to the fall of Lucifer.

Christ in the Psalms

Actually, it can be successfully argued that most prophecies found in the Bible have at least a double reference.² For example, the Psalms are sprinkled with prophecies that apply directly to David and his day while also applying to, and being fulfilled in, Jesus Christ. Psalm 22 is the classic example with David’s sufferings being a foreshadow of the Messiah’s future sufferings and death.

¹ Interestingly, even most Preterists (those who believe that the Tribulation prophecies of Matthew 24 and Revelation were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70) acknowledge that the prophecy given in Isaiah 7:14 has a dual bearing. If carried to its logical conclusion, they should also acknowledge that it is likely that other prophecies, including those in Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation, have near and long-term fulfillments.

² This is not to claim that a prophecy has multiple meanings. Rather, the prophecy has one meaning which is legitimately extended to apply to two or more events, or fulfilled in two or more stages.

Why Did the Jews Reject Their Messiah?

Many of the first century Jews were hoping that Messiah would usher in the kingdom of God immediately (Luke 19:11). In fact, one of the reasons the Jewish leadership rejected Jesus was that they were anticipating a conquering king who would rule from the throne of David. Many Old Testament passages promised this. For example, Isaiah 9:6-7 says that the Messiah would sit upon the throne of David forever: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever...”

Many Jews either missed, or chose not to believe, the prophecies regarding a Suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22). Even the disciples were hoping that Jesus’ earthly kingdom would immediately be set up in Jerusalem: “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). What they did not understand at that time is that some of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies applied to two or more events or were fulfilled in multiple stages. So in addition to multiple reference prophecies, there are many Bible prophecies which were, or will be, fulfilled in multiple stages. One clear example is Isaiah chapter 61:1-3—

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified...”

At the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry He quoted Isaiah 61, but stopped halfway through verse 2 with “To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Luke 4:18-21). Then He said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21).

The first part of this amazing prophecy was fulfilled at Jesus’ first coming when He preached good tidings to the poor, healed the broken, and preached freedom from sin. The second part of this prophecy will be fulfilled during the tribulation period – during “the day of vengeance of our God.” And finally, when Christ returns and His millennial reign on earth commences, the rest of Isaiah 61 will be fulfilled. Jesus will then “comfort all who mourn in Zion, ... give them beauty for ashes,...” and fulfill the rest of Isaiah 61. Therefore, this prophecy has at least a three stage fulfillment.

Many other Examples of Multiple Reference Prophecies

Our God is awesome and amazing! He alone is our transcendent Creator, who is sovereign and omniscient and orchestrates world events. He knows the full scope and panorama of history before it happens and has given us a multi-dimensional understanding through His Word. Like a hologram, the Lord has laid-out the full scene of history with multi-dimensional vision and precision through His Word!

Scripture contains numerous examples of prophecies with multiple references or multiple stage fulfillments. In fact, most (if not all) of the Messianic prophecies had both a near-term realization (applicable to the human author and his day), as well as a long-term fulfillment found in Jesus Christ.

In addition, the Word of God contains countless types and foreshadows which point to Christ. Jesus explained that all the Scriptures testify of Him.³ This claim is not an exaggeration. When we study all the wonderful types and foreshadows found in God's Word, we discover that truly "the volume of the book it is written of (Jesus Christ)" (Hebrews 10:7).

For example, Joseph is a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, Joseph loved his father and was the father's beloved; he was hated by his Jewish brethren; sold into the hands of his enemies; he was tempted yet he did not sin; he was punished unjustly; though he was thought to be dead, he was exalted and became the savior of the world; he received a Gentile bride; was exceedingly fruitful, and Joseph ultimately saved his brothers (and many others) and was reconciled to them in the end (refer to: Genesis chapters 37 and 39-50)!

The Olivet Discourse's Multiple Stage Prophecies

Because God's Word declares the full spectrum of history with precise, multi-reference detail, we should expect the last day's prophecies to also have multiple applications. For instance, the disciples asked Jesus, "When will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). The Lord responded by giving them a number of signs to look for recorded in Matthew 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21.

Some of these prophecies were fulfilled in 70 A.D. when the Roman armies attacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. In fact, the Roman Emperor Titus destroyed the temple so that "not one stone (was) left... upon another" (Matthew 24:2) just as Jesus prophesied.

However, many of the Olivet Discourse prophecies will not find their ultimate fulfillment until the final tribulation period. For example, Jesus warned, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21-22).

This was not fulfilled in 70 A.D. Since the first century there have been many periods of much greater world-wide tribulation. However, during the Great Tribulation – during earth's final 7 years, nearly all flesh will be destroyed (Isaiah 13:6-16; 24:1-23; Revelation 6-19). That has not happened yet, but it will be fulfilled in the near future.

Birth Pangs Rising

Knowing that God has established the biblical pattern of multiple stage and multiple reference fulfillments is key to understanding the last days' prophecies. In agreement with this biblical precedent, Jesus, John, Paul, and most of the Old Testament prophets indicated that the last days' prophecies would mount up together like birth pangs (Matthew 24:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-4; Isaiah 66:7-9; Micah 4:9-10; 5:3; etc.). Just as birth pangs increase in frequency and intensity just before delivery, so to, we should expect the last days' prophecies to arise like birth pangs – with each stage appearing more clearly and leading to the ultimate delivery and fulfillment.

³ Matthew 5:17; John 5:39; Hebrews 10:7; etc.

And today, every last days' prophecy is ramping up and positioning. Here are some examples of prophecies that are on the rise and positioning in stages:

- 1) Global government (Daniel 2:40-44; 7:23; Revelation 13:7-8)
- 2) Global tracking technology (Revelation 13:16-18)
- 3) Global communications (Revelation 11:9-10; 17:8)
- 4) Increasing instability of nature (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11; 25)
- 5) Increasing Hedonism (2 Timothy 3:4)
- 6) Increasing knowledge and travel (Daniel 12:4)
- 7) The Gospel spreading throughout the world (Matthew 24:14)

For more examples refer to the *101 Last Days Prophecies* booklet:
www.eternal-productions.org/101prophecy.html

Future Prophecies with Multiple References

Based on the biblical precedent of multiple references, we can expect that many of the last days' prophecies will apply to two or more events – or be fulfilled in multiple stages. Here are several prophecies to watch for where multiple references or multiple stage fulfillment appear most likely:

- 1) Two global religions. Revelation 17 indicates that a beautiful queen will lead a global counterfeit religion during the last days (cf. Isaiah 47; Zechariah 5). Initially the woman is in control and holding the reins. However, Revelation 13 and the second half of Revelation 17 indicate that the False Prophet will eventually cause the world to worship the Antichrist. Revelation 17:12-18 explains that at some point, the Antichrist and his ten kings will turn on the woman and her religious system to destroy her and usher in his global system. Therefore, it appears there will be a dual fulfillment with the radiant woman of Revelation 17 leading the first global religion with an apparent Christian veneer, followed by the Antichrist's New Age religious system in which he will exalt himself as God and perform lying signs and wonders to deceive the world into believing that they too can become gods (2 Thessalonians 2; Daniel 11:36-45; Genesis 3:5).
- 2) Two Babylons. Revelation 17 provides many clues that the harlot's final religion will preside over the world from Rome – specifically the Roman Catholic Church. However, Isaiah 13 and Zechariah 5 indicate that literal Babylon in Iraq will exist and be destroyed during the last days – during the Day of the Lord. Both prophecies are true, therefore this is an example of both a multiple reference prophecy and a multiple stage prophecy. Scripturally it appears the wicked woman begins her reign in Rome, but when the Antichrist's system persecutes her, she flees to her temple in Babylon before being destroyed (Zechariah 5; Revelation 17 and 18).
- 3) Jerusalem trampled by Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled (Luke 21:24). After the 1967 Six Day War, Israel controlled Jerusalem and the Temple mount for the first time in 1900 years. Sadly, however, Israel quickly relinquished control of Jerusalem to appease the Muslims. But after the Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17 end times war, they will likely reclaim full control of both Jerusalem and the Temple mount. Yet, Scripture reveals that even during the Tribulation period Gentiles will tread underfoot the holy city

and temple area for forty-two months (Revelation 11:2). Therefore this prophecy is being fulfilled in multiple stages, like birth pangs, and will not be completely fulfilled until Christ's Second Coming – during His millennial reign from Jerusalem (Psalm 2; Zechariah 14).

- 4) Multiple periods of false peace (1 Thessalonians 5:3). As God's Word anticipated, there is currently an unparalleled, concerted global effort to bring about peace and prosperity at any cost. The loudest cries for peace are for – 1) Peace in the Middle East between Israel and her neighbors, and 2) Global religious/ecumenical peace and tolerance led by the Roman Catholic Church. Interestingly, the Queen of Heaven – who refers to herself as the Queen of Peace – promises her followers that she will usher in global peace under the Roman Catholic Church (Isaiah 47; Zechariah 5; Matthew 13:33; Revelation 17). However, ultimately, we know from Daniel 8:23-25 and 9:27 that the Antichrist will use (false) peace and prosperity to destroy many. Therefore, multiple peace periods seems likely. Much more could be written concerning these false peace periods, but suffice to say that each of these periods of false peace will be short lived, and there will be no true peace until the Prince of Peace – the Lord Jesus Christ – returns (Isaiah 9:6-7; Zechariah 9:10).
- 5) Multiple removals. The Bible clearly promises that the Lord will Rapture (catch away) the true church (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; John 14:1-3; etc.). In addition, the two Jewish witnesses are also called up and ascend into heaven after they have finished their testimony (Revelation 11:12).⁴ Furthermore, it is possible that the 144,000 Jewish servants of God may also be removed and brought up to heaven without dying. Also some of the Tribulation believers may be “caught up to heaven”. A careful study of Revelation 7 and 14:1-5 may suggest this. Just as there is a multi-stage harvest in Israel (first fruits, main harvests, gleanings), it is possible there will be a multi-stage harvest and removal of believers. This is conjecture, but because of the biblical pattern of multiple reference prophecies, it is a possibility.
- 6) Multiple images (Revelation 13:14-15). Jesus warned that there would be many false christs during earth's final days (Matthew 24:23-27) – not just the Antichrist. If the False Prophet (second beast) tells the earth dwellers to make an image to the beast (Antichrist), and causes as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed, then it is at least possible that other false prophets and false christs will make or manifest some image to worship. For more information on this possibility, refer to the book: *Another Jesus?* Here are excerpts: www.eternal-productions.org/PDFS/AnotherJesus1-4.pdf and www.eternal-productions.org/PDFS/AnotherJesus10-12.pdf
- 7) Multiple marks (Revelation 13:16-18). The second beast, also called the False Prophet (Revelation 19:20), “causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Those “who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” are

⁴ After the Rapture of the church, Jesus will not descend again into the clouds to receive the two witnesses. However, they will be caught up to heaven to forever be with the Lord. So rather than multiple Raptures, it may be more accurate to say “multiple potential catching aways”, or “multiple ascensions of believers.”

damned eternally (Revelation 14:11). Based on the scriptural precedent presented in this article, it is possible that there will be more than one mark. Shockingly, the deceptive Queen of Heaven, who poses as Mary, has given messages that she will soon mark her followers with the sign of the cross on their foreheads. Though her mark is deceptive, it may not be damning for those who ultimately repent – because God still calls His people to come out of her (Revelation 18:4; Isaiah 47:8-9) – indicating salvation is still possible. In addition to these two deceptive marks, the Bible explains that God will seal His true servants on the forehead during the Tribulation (Revelation 7:3-4; 9:4; 14:1).

- 8) Outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days (Acts 2:16-21). On the Day of Pentecost the Apostle Peter quoted the prophecy from Joel 2:28-32. At that time the Holy Spirit was poured out and the church was born. However, Joel's prophecy also extends to "all flesh" just before the Tribulation: "I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh... I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Acts 2:17, 19-21). This is a global prophecy that is being fulfilled in stages. The first reference was on the Day of Pentecost. The second application appears to be the rebirth of the nation Israel in 1948, corresponding to the time when global evangelism began to mushroom and the Gospel was spreading globally (Matthew 24:14). A possible third application was after the 1967 Six-Day War when Israel regained control of Jerusalem. At that time, thousands of Jews testify to having their eyes opened and by God's grace many placed their faith in Jesus as their personal Messiah. And ultimately the Holy Spirit will yet be poured out on all flesh after the Rapture and "before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord"! According to Revelation 7, Daniel 12 and other passages, perhaps the greatest harvest of saved souls will come just before the Tribulation. The Rapture is alluded to in Revelation 4:1 and the Seal judgments begin in Revelation 6. What is interesting is that in the interim, we are told "the seven Spirits of God (are) sent out into all the earth" (Revelation 5:6). The number seven speaks of perfection and completion. Therefore the Holy Spirit, in all His Holiness and fullness and power, will be poured out on all flesh to convict and convert all who will repent and call upon the name of the Lord! And finally God makes this promise to the Jews at the end of the Tribulation: "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn ...I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" (Zechariah 12:10; 13:9). See also: Ezekiel 39:25-29 and Romans 11:26-27.

This study on Bible prophecies with multiple references and multiple stages could be greatly expanded, but Lord willing these examples will encourage you to dig into God's Word and strengthen your confidence in His amazing Word. Without doubt, "The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever" (Psalm 119:160).