

5. And what about fulfillment today? Signs of the times? We will speculate and wander about just a bit.

C. Conclusion...

We have a more sure word...we are thereby confirmed on the ground on which we stand and assured of the will and direction of God.

III. UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY

Acts 8:26-35, 1 Corinthians 2:9-16

A. A few introductory words

1. At this point in our study we think we have an idea of what prophecy is and what it means. To these considerations we have added something of its basic purpose. The question now is one of understanding.
2. A point that I will probably belabor the listeners with is this: To a large extent, the understanding of prophecy is a matter of the accumulation of enough material to have a background for thinking through what is being said. Many persons underestimate themselves in this area, they know the prophetic portions are vast and do not comprehend that no one "knows it all" so they assume they can know nothing. But this is unreal and such an attitude in other subjects would keep us hopelessly ignorant about everything!

The prophetic Scriptures were given to be understood. At times a cloak of mystery was announced (Daniel 12:9) and in other places the mass of material defies total comprehension (Ezekiel 40-48). But people were supposed to act on what God had said and we cannot believe that God was so obtuse as to expect solid performance on a basis of misunderstanding. So, for the moment, don't say "Prophecy is hard"...say rather, "I am building a fund of biblical and spiritual knowledge that will enable me to better understand what the prophetic Scriptures are discussing."
3. But this is not intended to make the matter overly simplistic. We will look at Ezekiel 17:1-10 for a couple of minutes to see both the more complicated aspects and how a little knowledge helps us see through passages that otherwise might appear obscure. I won't note the results at this point...we will just pause and view them.

B. What complicates our understanding of prophecy?

A number of important points must be discussed and we will utilize a fair block of time to see them and to illustrate the nature of the difficulty.

1. Emotion: not to be minimized. Jeremiah 19 and 20 offer a nice study in the subject. Emotion is more geared to forthtelling although applicable often to foretelling. It is a necessary