

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG154 – Can We Trust Prophecy Will Be Fulfilled?

Hi, and welcome to the podcast. I am here in Jerusalem and have just finished attending the Jerusalem Prayer Breakfast. One of the stories that was told a couple of times was about Rabbi Akiva; it is a long-standing story that is told by many. Rabbi Akiva, if you have never heard of him, is one of the most beloved figures in Judaism, and he is very well known. This is a fun story about Rabbi Akiva, because he is known as somebody who is very positive in his outlook of things. Rabbi Akiva was walking one day with several other rabbis, and they were looking down from where they were walking and they saw the Temple Mount and the destruction of the Temple. We see this today here in Jerusalem; when we go to the Mount of Olives, or from other locations, we have a real perspective of the Temple Mount and the destruction that has taken place. Actually, one of my favorite places to go is to the southern wall of the Temple Mount, and to observe the stones that have been thrown off of the Temple Mount onto the road and have broken up the road. So you can see, in a very living way still today, the destruction that has taken place.

So Rabbi Akiva was walking with other rabbis, and they were seeing the destruction of the Temple. The rabbis that were with him began to weep over the destruction. Rabbi Akiva, on the other hand, began to laugh. And so, those who were with him said, "Rabbi Akiva, why are you laughing?" He turned to them reportedly and said, "Why are you weeping?" They said, "We are weeping because of the destruction to the Temple. We are mourning over that destruction." Rabbi Akiva responded and said, "That is the very reason that I am laughing." He explained, as he went on, about the fact that the prophecy about the destruction of the Temple was now manifest. There was no real way to tell whether the prophecies were meant to take place literally, or if they were not to take place literally; and so, seeing the destruction of the Temple, he says, "I know now that the destruction and the prophecies have a literal fulfillment and a literal meaning. Therefore, when I look at this negative event of the destruction of the Temple, then I also know that the positive prophecies about the fulfillment of God's Word in the restoration and redemption of His people are also true, and will also take place. Therefore, from this terrible tragedy, I see that good will come of it, and that the redemption will come out of the destruction." So that is my paraphrase of the story. And every time I have heard it told by anyone, it is basically paraphrased.

But what we are dealing with in this story, really, is kind of the question about, is prophecy to be trusted? Can we believe that prophecy will see its fulfillment, will have its fulfillment? That is very important for us. One of the things I want you to get out of this podcast is a real drive to go in and study the prophecies. Now I am going to give you several prophecies, and I am going to read quite a bit of the prophecies that I think Rabbi Akiva would have been speaking about in this story – when he was talking about the literal fulfillment of the restoration, the redemption of the children of Israel and of the land, and all the positive things that he saw were in the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures. And I think it is really a time; it is a burden to me that in this time we live, that we really give ourselves to studying the prophecies, as obviously Rabbi Akiva had done, and many others have done; because the real way to tell where we are in the timing of God is by looking at what is going on surrounding the prophetic Word that

God has spoken in the Scriptures. That is what Rabbi Akiva was doing. He was saying, "I have read, I have seen the prophecies about this destruction. Now I see it with my eyes, so I know that it has taken place and it has been fulfilled. And now I can also trust that the other prophecies that are written in the Scriptures will be fulfilled."

Let's read some of the Scriptures. I know that there are several of these, and I wish you would have a pencil and paper and write these down so you can go back later and study them; or at least print out the show notes, so that you can have these in front of you, and really make it your own study. Because these are not all of the Scriptures, even though it seems like there are several of them that I am reading; and I am going to take the time to read them. But there are still more that you can discover and see in this, and I really encourage you to take the time to study it.

I am going to start at Deuteronomy the thirtieth chapter, verses 1-6.

"So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back. The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live."

In other words, never to be removed again from the land.

Verses 7-10,

"The Lord your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you shall again obey the Lord, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. Then the Lord your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the Lord will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey the Lord your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul."

What we see in these prophecies as we go through them is several things taking place. Number one, He is talking about the fact that they sinned, and they were removed from the land, and He brought judgment upon them. He brought destruction to the land, to the Temple, to the cities; and also, we see that He is going to bring a return, He is going to bring a blessing on every level. Now, one of the reasons why these prophecies are so important to us is because we are actually, in our day, witnessing the return of Israel to the land. We are witnessing these blessings beginning to happen. Not just the people returning, but again, the blessing on the land. The land is beginning to bloom, the people are being fruitful. So we are actually seeing these things take place. And remember, that was the point that Rabbi Akiva was making – "Since I have seen this fulfillment of destruction, then I know for sure that the good things which were prophesied about restoration will also happen." And we are seeing even more clearly

now, because we are seeing the positive things take place. He was looking forward off into history for it. We are actually witnessing it around us today in a very real way.

Ezekiel 37, starting at verses 21-22, says, ““Say to them, “Thus, says the Lord God, ‘Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.’”” God is going to deal with the division. We are seeing great division right now in the land over political issues, over the issues of the Supreme Court; many, many things we see still in division. But, like I said, we are also seeing a great deal of the fulfillment of the positive blessings. And we see the future blessings to come, which include the fact that there will be the descendant of David seated on the throne, and he will draw all of Israel together under himself as the one king, and they will be one undivided nation.

Verses 23-28,

““They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.

““My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.””

So again, we see the fulfillment of many of these things taking place before our very eyes. At the same time, we see the future fulfillments that are to come. And because we see the fulfillments that have transpired, those are our guarantees that the future fulfillments are also going to take place.

There will be one king over them. His presence will dwell among them, and they will be blessed forever to live in this land; and He will make a covenant of peace with them. So when we pray for the peace of Jerusalem, we know we will see the fulfillment of the peace for which we pray, because it is part of the blessing and the prophecies which God has already spoken over Israel, over the land, over Jerusalem.

Isaiah 2, starting with verses 1-2 says, “The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it.” So we see that it will be a house of prayer for all nations. And because of what Israel has gone through, the nations will come to the Lord and have a revelation of Him and serve Him with all of their hearts. Verse 3, “And many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” So we see that not only is Israel blessed, not only does the prophecy speak of that, but it speaks of the nations coming to the Lord, coming up to Jerusalem, coming to the house of the Lord, that they may learn His ways and walk in His paths.

Jeremiah 31:31-36 says,

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of hosts is His name: “If this fixed order departs from before Me,” declares the Lord, “then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.”

Again, the Lord gives a promise about the fulfillment of His promises and these prophecies, that if the sun stops coming up in the morning and the moon stops coming up in the evening and the heavens cease their function, then the covenant will be broken. But aside from that, the covenant is an everlasting covenant. These prophecies are assured, and they will come to pass, and they will be eternal in their fulfillment.

Jeremiah 32:36-42 says,

“Now therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning this city [speaking of Jerusalem] of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.’ Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety.”

God bless the safety of Israel, it is always being challenged on a daily basis. But again, because we are seeing the fulfillments we are seeing, we know that Jerusalem and Israel will dwell in safety.

“They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.”

This is what God is doing right now today with all of His heart and all of His soul. You can't find anywhere else in the Scriptures where it says God is doing something different with all of His heart. This He does with all of His heart – He plants them in the land and fulfills His Word over them. ““For thus says the Lord, “Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them.””

Going on to Ezekiel 11:16-20,

“Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a

little while in the countries where they had gone.” Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”’”

The land of Israel is that which belongs to this people. It is their eternal capital.

“When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances to do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.”

One more, Ezekiel 39:25-29.

Therefore thus says the Lord God, “Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name. They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their own land with no one to make them afraid. When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” declares the Lord God.

So we see tremendous promises that are to be fulfilled. And these are probably some of the Scriptures that were going through Rabbi Akiva’s head when he was laughing, looking at the destruction of the Temple, knowing that because he witnessed that destruction, he would also witness these blessings, and that they would likewise be fulfilled. And we should feel the same way. Because we witness the prophecies that have been fulfilled, we know that all future prophecies will have their fulfillment. That is something that is very key to us in these days.

In Second Peter 3, it says in verses 3-6,

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

So what is Peter saying here? He is saying the same thing that Rabbi Akiva was saying. He says, “Look, you mockers, you are missing it. You need to look back at history and see the fact that there was a flood, just as Noah spoke; and that God brought that flood, and that the earth was changed. And when you say nothing has happened since the days of the fathers, since the beginning of creation, you are missing the truth of history. I think this is very important in this generation, because I think history is something that has not been studied, certainly where the prophecies are concerned. We need to go back as the people of God, and as Christians, and study the prophecies of the Scriptures, and recognize that they show us both what has happened, and they are showing us what is happening now before our very eyes; and that points to that which will happen.

You know, the disciples had this perspective when they were with the Lord. In Matthew 24:1-3, it says,

Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming?"

So they were interested. Christ is prophesying here about this destruction of the Temple – which Rabbi Akiva had been observing along with the rest of the rabbis, and he was looking forward to the Scriptures that were about the restoration. Now, the disciples knew these Scriptures also, because in Acts 1, at the time of the ascension of Christ, in verses 6-8 it says,

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

So, they knew these prophecies about the Kingdom being restored. What they didn't know at this time was the fact that they had not yet seen, which is what Rabbi Akiva was looking at, the total destruction and Diaspora which was to come. So they had seen in part, but they could only see as far as the fulfillment had taken place of the prophecies.

Now Christ was speaking to them about the destruction of the Temple that would take place; but that did not mean that they realized the totality of that destruction and of the Diaspora that would take place in 70 AD. So we see that there were further prophecies that came, even to the disciples; and though they recognized that there was a restoration that would come, and the Kingdom would be restored to Israel, and that the King would sit upon the throne, the son of David, as part of that restoration, they were not able to see the whole picture. Because, again, not enough of the prophecies had yet been fulfilled in their day. And that is one thing we need to recognize. We live in a day where we have seen the fulfillment of the Diaspora taking place to its totality. We have seen the destruction of the Temple. We have seen the destruction of Jerusalem, and the devastation of the land of Israel. But we now, different than the disciples, are also looking and seeing clearly that the restoration is happening. They were asking the Lord, "Is it at this time that You are going to restore the kingdom?" We actually are seeing the kingdom restored for sure, because we are seeing the return in the land. We are seeing a nation born in a day. We are seeing many of the aspects of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel really happening right before our eyes, and we need to recognize that. And when we do recognize it, then we are able to look forward to the further fulfillments that should be taking place right before us.

So we have a very unique perspective in all of history. Our generation right now has a perspective that no other generation has ever had, because we can look at what is transpiring and say we have seen the cycle, and we understand that we are in the midst of the restoration of the things that were prophesied. And so, it is important that we study the prophecies and understand clearly what is yet to take place. We may not understand the timing of it, but we do understand what the fulfillments will be.

To conclude this, I want to make a few points of emphasis. We know that Yeshua spoke prophecies that have been fulfilled; these are further prophecies that were not necessarily clarified within the Hebrew Scriptures to a great extent. He told of His suffering; He told of His death; He told of His resurrection,

and His ascension to the Father. He prophesied the further destruction of the Temple in the Second Temple period. All of these things we know have been fulfilled, and they are in our day and time historical facts. So, like Rabbi Akiva, we can rejoice in these things. Even though some of these things are painful and disastrous, we can rejoice in what has happened; because now, for certain, we know that the prophecies of His return and earthly rule on earth as the King of kings and the Lord of lords will also happen. And we now wait, and can wait with confident expectation, as we continue to see daily before our eyes the Word of God being fulfilled, leading us to the final day of the Lord which has been prophesied. Like all other prophecies, it will have its complete fulfillment. And we believe for that to transpire in our day.

Amen.