

Christ in Prophecy
Conference 79: The Hope of Fulfilling the Great Commission

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Opening

Tim Moore: On behalf of all of us here at Lamb & Lion Ministries – welcome! Have the difficulties in this life and the rapid moral decay of our society tempted you to lose hope that things will ever get any better? Then it's so good that you could join us in this special "Christ in Prophecy" series where we are seeking to rekindle your passion for the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Nathan Jones: Did you know that for Christians, hope springs eternal? Our hope doesn't lie in human government, as our founder, David Reagan, proved in the first episode in this series. Rather, as I showed you in the second episode, our hope lies in nothing less than Jesus Christ and His righteousness. Believers in Christ are grounded by the iron-clad promise that our Savior will indeed one day return to catch up – Rapture – His Church to Heaven so that we may be with Him forever.

Tim Moore: Now we are going to address when the Rapture will take place. At our Hope Springs Eternal Bible Conference, held in March of 2023 at Hikes Point Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, we were joined by Doug Cobb of The Finishing Fund—which seeks to fulfill Jesus' command to "go therefore and make disciples of all the nations," what Christians call "The Great Commission." Doug will demonstrate just how close the Church is in reaching every tribe, tongue, and nation with the Gospel—an urgent goal that will soon be achieved—in our lifetimes!

Nathan Jones: We'll follow Doug with Bob Russell of Bob Russell Ministries. Not only is Bob the former pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, he was also my old boss when I served on the staff there. In the coming excerpt, Bob draws lessons from the hope that Simeon held out for the arrival of the Christ child to our hope for the return of the Messiah. Here now are Doug Cobb and Bob Russell.

Part 1: Presentation by Doug Cobb of the Finishing Fund

Doug Cobb: The first thing I want you to understand is that this Great Commission task can be broken down into three B's, three pieces of work that need to be done: Believers in every people group, the Bible in every language, a Body of Christ, a church in every place, every village, every neighborhood, every suburb, every high rise. And this isn't biblical, this is practical, but it really does a great job of framing what, you know, many of your brothers and sisters around the world are working on today to bring the Great Commission to a completion. When we get to the place where there are believers in every people group, the Bible in every language, a church, a body of Christ in every place, we're going to start looking around and figuring out what comes next, because we'll really have done what Jesus told us to do.

Now, let's just talk for a minute about this first, B believers in every people group. I've been privileged for the last five years to lead a ministry called the Finishing Fund, it's kind of a financing ministry. It's a little bit like a venture capital fund for the Great Commission that helps to finance missionaries who will go for the first time to a people group that nobody's ever been to before on the planet. So I have kind of a ringside seat into this, seeing what's happening around the world. So we already said there are 12,000 of these people groups worldwide. And they can be broken down into three big categories by their status with the Gospel. So at the top of the stack is a group of people groups that we would call reached, you live among the reached. There are a lot of churches, there are a lot of believers. The Gospel is readily available. You live in the reached world.

Below that is a very big band called the Unreached World, you may have heard of this. In the Unreached World there are some believers, and some churches, but not very many, the Gospel is not readily available, although it is present. A great example of an unreached people group would be the Turks, in Turkey, there's something like 60 million Turks in Turkey. There might be 60,000 Jesus followers in Turkey among those people. So that would be .1% of the population. Very, very tiny Christian presence. That's the unreached world. Lots of work to do among the unreached, but at least there's some Christian presence in those places.

At the very bottom of the stack is this band that we call the unengaged. And the unengaged would be people groups where there are no believers, and no churches, and nobody even going to tell them about Jesus. Isn't it tragic to think that after 2,000 years, there's still people groups that nobody has been to tell them the good news of Jesus Christ. But, you know, I want to, this next image, I hope is going to really excite you because it shows the progress about what's happening in the world among the unengaged. In 2005, about the time I started to get involved in this work, by God's grace, by the best list we had, there are about 3,500 unengaged people groups, so 12,000 total, 3,500 still unengaged. That would be something like 30% of the people groups still had no Gospel witness at all. But by 2017, that number had fallen by more than half, our best guess that we were down to 1,450 people groups that had never heard. And as of today, based on my best information, it's not perfect, but it's pretty good, I think, we're now down to just 55 people groups without an active project in the world. Now there's another 125 or so where there's people there telling them about Jesus, but we haven't seen any fruit yet. I'm hopeful that we'll see some good news on those in the next round of reporting that we get. But even counting those we're now down under 200 people groups where there are no believers in Jesus Christ. That's an amazing thing. That's an amazing thing. We live in amazing days.

Think about a relay race that's been going on for 2,000 years and the baton has been passed from generation to generation and some of them made major impacts, and some of them made almost no impact at all because of the times and the places in which they lived. But now we, our generation, has the privilege of being the anchor runner in that race. The baton has been passed for the last time, I'm persuaded, and that our generation will never have to pass it because we're going to finish this task in our generation, by God's grace. The Bible says it is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord. And the reason this is happening is not because we are smarter, or better, or work harder or, you know, many of the advantages we have, we do have some advantage, but the reason this is happening, is because God's Spirit is moving with urgency around the world to see this task completed. I'm persuaded that He knows that our time is very, very short and that this needs to be finished before Jesus comes back.

Now, there are some things that have made this move faster in recent years. One of them is we have great technological advantages: the Internet, television, radio, think about the fact that all of those things are, you know, less than 100 years old. We have transportation that nobody could have imagined. When I go to India, I fly to New York, I get on a plane about 9:00 at night, I arrive in Delhi about the same time the next night, it takes, you know, with the shifting time zones, it takes about 14 hours to make that trip. I get a lay flat seat, so I wake up and I'm feeling good. When the first missionaries to India went in the 19th Century, the mid-1800s, it took them months on a boat just to get there. They took everything they had because they knew they likely wouldn't be coming back. We can now make that trip in less than a day. I think it's possible to be anywhere in the world today within a day, certainly within 48 hours, you can be anywhere in the in the world.

We have better techniques now of, you know, Gospel presentation. We understand better the world. We understand how things are perceived in other cultures better. That helps a lot. One of the key things that has made this happen is the mobilization of the worldwide church. You probably think about missionaries as being you've got pictures of people on your refrigerator that you are supporting and you're praying for, and they look kind of like we do. They look like us right, they are Americans or Westerners who've gone overseas. But in fact, almost all of this progress has been made not by Westerners, but by national missionaries in their countries taking the Gospel to people in their country who don't know. Indians who love Jesus, going to Indians who've never heard. Laotians going to Laotians, Chinese going to Chinese. I kind of love that. I mean, there's some great reasons that's very effective and efficient.

But one of the reasons I love it is because I see it as being a kind of an answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17, for the unity of His Church. That the West and the Global East and the Global South, the church in all those places has come together with each part of the church putting into the pot the things that we're best at. In the West we're good at planning. We've got plenty of money. We can help finance things. We're good at reporting. But we have a hard time living where the temperature is 120 degrees and the food is strange and our brothers and sisters from around the world are used to those things and can go and have the passion and the willingness to make this happen. I can't imagine God sending Jesus back without beginning to answer that John 17 prayer for unity among His people. And I love to see it wherever it begins to show up.

Now, that's the first B. But let me just tell you a little bit about the second and third B's as well. Second B is the Bible in every language. Best as we can tell, there are 7,388 languages on the planet. I just memorized that for the quiz. Don't ask me you know anything about that. And there are still about 2,000 of those that don't have any Gospel at all in their language. But the really smart people, the really good people who are working on this, some of my friends have made a commitment that by the year 2033, there will be some Scripture in every language on the planet. On the third B goal, churches in every place. The best guess is, is that there are about 6 million inhabited places on the planet, 6 million villages, cities, towns, and that about half of them have churches. So we've got to plant 3 million more churches. But the good news is, is that people are working on that and that goal is also 2033 to see that task completed. So that's what just now ten years out from where we are today.

Now my opinion is, Tim kind of hinted at this, that we are now only months away from seeing the first B goal completed. My partner and I are working on this, believe that we see a path to all but about 3 of those 55 remaining people groups. And by God's grace, the ones where people are already working and haven't had fruit yet, that we will begin to see that in the next few months.

My hope is, is that by the end of this year, we will be down to just a handful of people groups, maybe zero, where there is not an active effort to take the Gospel to them.

Part 2: Presentation by Bob Russell of Bob Russell Ministries

Bob Russell: Verse 25, "There was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, righteous and devout, he was waiting for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was on him, it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. And moved by the Spirit he went into the temple courts." There is a direct correlation between the strength of your hope and the depth of your obedience.

Remember back when you were a teenager and you're lying in bed lounging around on Saturday morning and your mother comes in the room about 8:30 and she says, "All right, I want you out of that bed. I want this room to be cleaned up. It is a pigsty. And I'm tired of looking at it. And I want you to clean this place up. I'm going to leave, I'm going to be back here by 11:30. And when I get back here at 11:30, this better be spotless. Do you understand?" "Yeah." Now, let's say you lay there till about 10:30, and you get up and you toss the covers over the pillow, and kick a few things under the bed and throw a few things in the closet. Are you looking forward to your mother coming back? Probably not. Why? Because you know you're going to be under her wrath. You might not be kicked out of the family, but she is not going to be super happy with you.

But let's say the Holy Spirit, comes on you at 8:30 and you bound out of bed and you make your bed like you're in the military, you can bounce a quarter off the cover. And you pick up all the clutter, and you put it away and you put the things in the closet that are to be in the closet, and things in the hamper ought to be in the hamper. And you take some of the pictures off the wall your mother doesn't like. And I mean, the thing looks spotless. And she's not back yet, so you go out in the garage and you start straightening up the garage. You sweep out the garage. She's still not back yet. So you get out in the flower garden, you start weeding the flower garden. Are you looking forward to your mother coming home? Yeah. Why? Because you're walking in obedience. You're doing even more than expected. And when she comes home, she is so pleased with you. She thinks I've got the greatest child in the world. Here's \$100. You don't have any curfew anymore, you are free to live as you please. Yeah, well, that may be an exaggeration, but you get the point.

Now, our hope in the return of Jesus Christ is directly related to whether we're walking in obedience or not. Simeon was righteous and devout, and then it says it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah. Now we're not told how the Holy Spirit revealed that to Simeon, but as such a specific, such a dramatic revelation, it had to be more than a hunch or an impression. The Lord must have spoken audibly or a clear vision saying, Simeon, you're going to live to see the coming of the Messiah. And I'm sure Simeon had some friends who rolled their eyes every time he talked about this. Yeah, we've heard that before. But he knew what he knew, he'd been told by the Holy Spirit that he would live to see the Messiah.

Then the Bible says in verse 27 it says, "Moved by the Spirit, He went into the temple courts." This time it appears that the Holy Spirit that morning gives a kind of divine nudge to Simeon to go to the Temple today.

I bought a new car, not too long ago. And it's got this feature on it called steering assist. How many of you rich people have steering assist? You turn on steering assist and if your car gets out of the lane, it'll nudge you back into the lane. And if you force it to go over the white line, a buzzer sounds and warns you to get back in your own. I don't like it one bit. I've already got somebody in the car telling me how to drive, I don't need the car telling me how to. But you know what? That's not, that's not unlike how the Holy Spirit guides a mature believer who walks by the Spirit. It's not usually an audible voice, it's just some inner prompting, an inner prodding. And when you stay in your lane, you're safer, and your sense of hope is enhanced. When you get out of God's preference, your troubles increase and your hopes diminish.

I met a guy probably two months ago who told me the first time he came to Southeast Christian Church, we were in the building down the street, he said, "I came kind of reluctantly. Somebody begged me to come. I came with a sour attitude." He said, "The place was packed, I couldn't find a seat. And I looked around." He said, "I said, that's it. I'm heading home." But just then a guy grabbed me, jumped out of his seat, grabbed me by the arm, said, "Here, sit here." And he put me down beside his wife and two kids. He said, "I've never seen that guy again in my life." But he said, "I sat there, and the service really moved me. I came back, and I came back. I gave my life to the Lord. I brought my family." Then he introduced me to another guy that he had brought, and that guy brought his family. Who knows how many people? All that happened because some guy sitting in a seat I think was nudged by the Holy Spirit, say, get up, give the guy your seat. Have you ever had a prompting like that? Somebody came to mind out of the blue and you decided to give him a call, and they said, "I can't believe you call me today. I really needed it." Or you're about to do something you shouldn't do and your conscience hurts you, or the Holy Spirit nudged you and you backed away. And years later, you're glad that you did.

You see the Bible promises when you become a Christian God doesn't just forgive our sin and cleanse your heart, He fills you with His Holy Spirit to give you guidance and power. Now, let me caution you a moment. Don't interpret every inner impression you get as guidance from the Holy Spirit. God speaks to us primarily through His Word. Second, Peter 1:21 says "The Scriptures were written by men who spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." So if you want to be guided by the Holy Spirit, you saturate yourself with the Word of God, and God is never going to contradict His Word. He's never going to guide you to do something that is contrary to His Word.

I guess about five years ago, I took my grandson to Cincinnati where Tim Tebow was a speaker, and we stood in line for about a half hour so he could meet Tim Tebow. And you wouldn't believe, I think there were three, maybe four girls between 18 and 23 years of age who believe that the Holy Spirit had told them they were going to marry Tim Tebow. Now, somebody got it wrong, because I don't think the Lord wants Tim Tebow to be a polygamist. And sometimes it's hard to tell the prompting of the Holy Spirit from our own selfish desires, or the first things that come into the mind. So before you interpret an idea that comes to mind that you believe is the Holy Spirit moving you, study God's Word, run it by Christian friends. There's an interesting verse in the book of Acts 15:28, where the Apostle Paul said "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." You see, Paul double checked with his companions to make sure his understanding of the nudging of the Holy Spirit was correct. So God guides us by His Word, the council of friends, and then the nudging of the Holy Spirit they're interwoven with each other, but I think the longer you're Christian, the more you are a Christian, you sense this guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I want to tell you an occasion where, as a young preacher that helped me. In my senior year of Bible College, I took a weekend church at a place called Monterey Christian Church, about 35 miles east of Cincinnati. This church had about 70 people. It was a weekend church. For 100 years they had a preacher come out on Sunday, preach Sunday morning, Sunday night, then he'd go back to whatever his occupation was or schooling. At the end of a year, I said to the elders of this little church, I do not want to be a bi-vocational preacher, but I'm graduating this year. Would you consider hiring me full-time? Well, they had a two hour elders meeting and they emerged saying, you know, we were paying you \$50 a week to come out and preach Sunday morning, Sunday night, if you will come full-time, we will pay you \$70 a week. I was worth \$20 more dollars, those six days now that boils down to \$3.33 a day. I accepted it. But they said, now, if we're going to pay you this kind of money, we want you to guarantee that you will stay at least a year. Okay, I'll stay a year.

It wasn't four months later a conference on Evangelism, Taft Auditorium, Cincinnati, Ohio a complete stranger came up to me and he said, "My name is Butch Dabney. I'm from Louisville, Kentucky. We're starting a brand new church in Louisville." And he began to paint this glowing picture of the right location, the right leadership, good spirit among the people, unbelievable potential. And I said to him, nudged by the Holy Spirit, "It sounds great, but I can't come because I promised Monterey Church I'd stay a year." And I remember walking away from that conversation, saying, "Well, I turned away a great opportunity," but I felt good because I knew I didn't have to wrestle with it. It wasn't right, because I'm not supposed to lie.

About five months after that. One Sunday morning, I'm standing at the door at Monterey, shaking people's hands. And these two women dressed a little more elaborately than most of our ladies dress came out. And I said, "Are you visiting with us today?" "Yes, we are. I'm Viola Divine this is my daughter, Mildred." I said, "Well, are you from around here?" "No, we're not from around here." They got a little evasive. And I said, "Where are you from?" And they said, "We're from Louisville, Kentucky." And I remember feeling in my spirit, I'm going to Louisville, Kentucky. I realized what had happened. They had searched, and searched, and that they will find a preacher and there all the way back down to me.

And, you know, if I would have come five or six months earlier, they were in a fund raising program to help finance this building, which was really healthy for the church to do without a preacher, everybody had to get involved. But if I would have come, they would have expected me to lead it and they would have discovered sooner than they did, I had no clue what I was doing. But when I came, I came in hope and confidence because I had at that point followed the nudging of the Holy Spirit. I wish I had always done that in my life, but that was one occasion when I did.

Let's note one other thing about Simeon's hope. He confronted death with confidence, even though he had not personally experienced it. His was a peaceful hope. Look at verse 27, "When the parents brought in the child, Jesus, to do for Him what the custom of the law required. Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God, saying," now this is Simeon's Song of praise. A footnote in the NIV Study Bible says this Hymn of Simeon is called The Nunc Dimittis, which is Latin, meaning you may now dismiss. "Sovereign Lord as you have promised you may now dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations, the light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people, Israel." Now, this is an amazing song, an amazing instance. Simeon takes this month and a half old baby in his arms. Born to parents so poor they couldn't afford a lamb. Wrapped in swaddling

clothes, laying in a cow slobbered manger. And he says Holy Spirit, this is the one. This is the way God comes into the world. This is the one. "And ecstatic with joy, Simeon declares, 'Lord, you fulfilled your promise. I'm now ready to die in peace.'" Now, why is he so confident of death? He never experienced it. He didn't know what it was like first hand. But he says, "My eyes have seen your salvation." Notice he doesn't say, I can die in peace because I've been a righteous man. No, he says, I can die in peace because I see my salvation, it's not my works, it's a person. The Bible says it is by grace that you were saved through faith, this is not of yourself, it is a gift of God, not of works lest anybody should boast.

And then Simeon goes on to miraculously predict the death of Jesus. "Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, 'This child is destined to cause the falling and the rising of many in Israel.'" Now prophets often prophesied beyond their own understanding. And when Simeon said, this is a blessing for the Gentiles as well as the Jews, Simmons said, what did I just say? The Gentiles, too? And this child is destined to cause the rising and the fall. He's going to cause some to fall. You see this hostility against Christianity today? They're against Jesus. He's causing them to fall. But He's going to cause the rising of those who are obedient and submit to Him.

Closing:

Nathan Jones: While we wish we had the time to show you Doug Cobb and Bob Russell's presentations in their entirety, you can watch the entire conference free from the Sermons page on our website at christinprophecy.org, on our Christ in Prophecy YouTube and Rumble channels, and through our downloadable Lamb and Lion App.

Tim Moore: If you would like to have a complete set of these messages, just order the Hope Springs Eternal Bible Conference DVD by contacting us at the website or phone number below. This 3-disc album titled "Hope Springs Eternal" includes the presentations on your screen.

This inspirational DVD set also includes the 52-minute Questions and Answers session where our speakers answer such difficult questions as: "What prophecies remain before the Lord can return?", "Will unbelievers see Christians being raptured up to Heaven?", "Can those left behind still be saved?", "Will we recognize each other once we're in our glorified bodies?", and many more.

This DVD album would make a great resource for your Sunday school or home Bible study. For only a gift of \$25 or more, and that includes shipping, order your copy of the Hope Springs Eternal Bible Conference DVD today!

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Tim Moore: Join us next week as I wrap up this series with the forward-looking message, "The Hope That is to Come." Until then, look up and be watchful, for our Blessed Hope is drawing near!

End of Program