

What is Next? (Part 1)

Author: Larry W. Wilson

"Dear Mr. Wilson:

What does Bible prophecy predict will happen next? One internet site says one thing and another says something else. Because I am not a Bible scholar and honestly, I don't have much confidence in my pastor, I don't know who or what to believe.

From a secular point of view (politically, economically, ecologically, militarily, religiously, etc.), there is a great deal of uncertainty. I am guessing there is going to be a global implosion of some kind and I cannot figure out what I should do. Would you break this down for me? I would like to know what is coming next?

John"

Dear John:

Yes, it seems as though there is a new crisis roiling the world every month or so, but if recorded history proves anything, it proves that bad news does not mean that the end of the world is at hand. I do believe that the end of the world is near, but not on the basis of what we hear or read in the media. God has given all of us something far better than media driven eschatology to indicate the nearness of Christ's return. It is called, "Bible prophecy!"

The books of Daniel and Revelation are different than the other books in the Bible. The book of Daniel was written around 600 B.C. and God put a seal on this book until the time of the end. (See Daniel 12:4, 9.) This indicates that God has something to reveal to the final generation that He has not revealed before. The book of Revelation was written around A.D. 100 and even though it was not sealed up like the book of Daniel, Revelation depends on the unsealing of Daniel to make sense.

God embedded two amazing elements within the books of Daniel and Revelation for the benefit of the last generation who would live on Earth. First, He put a chronological sequence of prophetic events in these books. These events began to unfold about 600 B.C. and the sequence will continue without interruption until the world is purified of sin - 1,000 years after the Second Coming. Second, God put eighteen spans of time within this sequence of events so that we can determine the overall duration of God's plan.

Once we understand *how* the prophetic sequences of Daniel and Revelation align with each other, we can determine our chronological position within God's plan. With a little training, an ordinary person can determine the *previous* prophetic event and the *next* prophetic event for himself because the Bible speaks for itself. This feature of apocalyptic prophecy is the basis for

my assertion that the book of Daniel has been unsealed and that Christ's return is very near.

Why Experts Disagree

When it comes to interpreting Bible prophecy, it is true that one expert says one thing and another expert says something else. Prophetic expositors arrive at different conclusions because there are as many different methods of interpretation as there are people.

Methods of interpretation is a phrase that defines a controlling set of ideas or views that a person has in mind *before* he or she actually begins to interpret prophecy. Doctrinal beliefs, presuppositions, assumptions, concepts about the role and authority of Scripture, the use of external authority, and church traditions produce controlling ideas. Notice how they work: A Catholic scholar will interpret Bible prophecy so that his Catholic doctrines and his prophetic conclusions harmoniously align, and a Baptist scholar will do the same thing.

In other words, two scholars can study the *same* passages of Scripture and arrive at different conclusions because everyone approaches Bible prophecy with some kind of baggage. This baggage is called "methods of interpretation," "presuppositions," "rules of interpretation," or hermeneutics. Perhaps the following parable will illustrate the controlling power that comes with baggage.

The Parable of the Math Teacher

Once upon a time, there was a math teacher who was invited to teach math in at a college in a distant city called Overspent. During the first week of college algebra, the teacher discovered a puzzling situation. His students could not solve a single math problem correctly. In fact, all of the students gave identical answers for each math problem that he gave them.

He asked the students to explain how they had entered college - given the fact they did not have the skills necessary to resolve basic math problems. The students said their high school teachers did not require them to work through math problems because highly educated and spiritually guided math teachers long ago had solved all math problems and all that they needed to do was to memorize the answers. The teacher was shocked.

The next day, the teacher set out to remedy the problem. He put this equation on the board: $3c + 5 = 20$. He asked the students to solve for c . All of the students reported that c was equal to 3. When the teacher asked how they arrived at 3, they said they had always been taught that c *always* equals 3.

The teacher could not believe his ears. He demonstrated on the chalkboard how c was solved, and he proved that $c = 5$ in the equation using simple *rules* of substitution. The students became angry. They were insulted by this "outsider" because he showed no respect for their high school elders and their traditional way of solving math problems.

The students told the teacher that if he had written $3e + 5 = 20$, their answer would have been 5

because "e" always equals 5. They had been taught that "a" always = 1, "b" always = 2, "c" always = 3, etc. The teacher responded by saying that in math, a variable's name does not determine its value. It does not matter whether a variable is called "e" or "c" or "x."

When it comes to resolving a math problem, the *process* must conform to valid rules of substitution or the answer will be erroneous. The students could not bear to hear any more of this heresy, so they rose up as one man and stormed out of class. The math teacher was stunned. He wondered how he could help these students.

They knew nothing about working through math problems or that math is controlled by *four self-evident rules* of addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division. He thought to himself, "They think they have been properly informed and they are afraid to consider answers that are contrary to traditions of their elders." Perplexed by their hostility, he wondered what he could do to get the students to put aside their traditions so that they could consider the truth.

The next day, the teacher plainly said to his students: "Please hear me out. You have been misled. Your knowledge of math is worthless. Memorizing the answer to a math problem is not to be confused with properly working through a legitimate process to find the correct answer.

If you follow the four rules that govern basic math, you can test and validate your answers in many different ways. More importantly, others who know nothing about you or your elders can also test the validity of your answers because accurate math solutions are not a matter of opinion, they are a matter of fact.

Accurate solutions are true because they can be proven true by self-evident rules!" Immediately, the students became hostile. The teacher had condemned their traditions and their beloved elders. He had insulted them and their exalted high school teachers. They threw desks and chairs at the teacher and in a riotous frenzy, they beat him to death.

When the bell rang, the students went away happy. They were relieved that the offending teacher had been silenced. They petitioned the dean of the college to provide a math teacher who would teach according to their elders and their wish was granted.

Years later, many of these students graduated from Overspent City College and some of them went to work for the elders of the city. Later, the city faced an enormous financial crisis and all of the elders and college graduates could not stop the city from going bankrupt. When the auditors showed up, no one in the accounting department could figure out what went wrong - literally.

There are four lessons to be learned from this silly parable. First, for most of us, traditions are more important than truth. Traditions are familiar and predictable, whereas the truth can be disruptive, humiliating and socially divisive. Second, it is impossible to be "a defender of the faith" and at the same time, be "a seeker of truth."

These two mindsets stand in opposition to each other. Third, if someone exposes the folly of a tradition, he or she will surely suffer for it. Last, if we reject or ignore the truth, failure cannot be avoided. We may arrogantly defend our ignorance, but ignorance will not save us from the

results that truth demands.

Can the Bible Tell Us Things We Don't Want to Believe?

Experts widely disagree in Bible prophecy because knowingly or unknowingly, every expert uses a **set of rules** to support prophetic conclusions. Of course, every expert believes his conclusions are true because they are in harmony with his baggage (or rules). The problem, of course, is that false rules cannot produce valid conclusions.

A rule is a statement that is always true. For example, $2 + 2$ equals 4 because the law of subtraction says that $4 - 2 = 2$. When it comes to Bible prophecy, a rule cannot have an exception, for if it does, no one has the authority to speak for God and tell humanity when the rule should be applied or ignored. To illustrate this matter, consider the following rule: "A day in Bible prophecy *a/ways* equals a year." If we accept this rule to be true (that is, having no exception), the 1,000 years in Revelation 20 have to be translated as 365,242 years. (365.242 days per solar year x 1,000 years = 365,242 years)

For reasons that will be presented next month, the day/year rule described above is faulty. There are time periods in Daniel and Revelation where a day should be translated as a year (for example, the seventy weeks of Daniel 9 are translated into 490 years), but there are other time periods where translation is not permitted.

For example, the 42 months in Revelation 13 and the 1,335 days in Daniel 12 are literal time periods. Because some time periods in prophecy are translated a day for a year and others are not, a valid rule is required to tell us when time periods should be translated and when they should not.

Here is the critical point: If we use a rule that requires us to translate *every* time period in Daniel and Revelation into a day for a year, the Bible will be put in a position of internal conflict. The Bible will not be able to speak for itself because the chronological order given in Daniel and Revelation will be broken! (I will demonstrate this point in next month's newsletter.)

Today, millions of Christians have embraced prophetic concepts that have no truth in them. A prophetic concept can *appear* to be true - if flawed rules, that is, certain presuppositions are used. For example, many Christians believe that the role of modern day Israel is prophetically important during the end of the world.

They also believe that a pre-tribulation rapture is imminent, but the underlying presuppositions that hold these ideas together are faulty. The New Covenant teaches that the Israel of God is not biological! Everyone in Christ is now the heir of Abraham. (Galatians 3:28,29)

Logic and reasonableness do not alone ensure validity. For thousands of years, people believed Earth stood still and the Sun traveled in its orbit around Earth. In fact, everyone could plainly see that the Sun traveled across the sky! Then, along came an obscure mathematician who said the Sun stood still.

Even worse, Copernicus *proved* that the Sun was not moving and he was severely punished for speaking out against the traditions of the elders and telling the truth. History demonstrates that advocates of truth are frequently punished. (Wasn't Jesus crucified for speaking the truth?) Nevertheless, for the honest in heart, great joy occurs when greater truth is found!

An ongoing discovery of greater truth is the process that enables the Bible to tell us things that we do not want to believe, but unfortunately, many people do not want or have a working knowledge of Scripture. Most people are content with their traditions (the familiar) and they are quick to discredit the truth (which is divisive). Perhaps the greatest problem for human beings is that we cannot know what our response to truth will be until greater truth arrives and it challenges our sacred traditions.

Faulty Interpretations until Daniel Is Unsealed

The book of Daniel contains 533 sentences. It was written about twenty-six centuries ago, but unlike the other sixty-five books in the Bible, the book of Daniel was sealed up "until the time of the end." The angel, Gabriel, said to Daniel, ". . . **Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.**" (Daniel 12:9)

What does "closed up and sealed until the time of the end" mean? It means that God hid something in the book of Daniel that would remain "top secret" until the time of the end arrived. I am convinced that the book of Daniel has been unsealed and the time of the end has arrived for the following reasons:

The secret information that God encoded into the book of Daniel is something like the "Rosetta Stone." The Rosetta Stone was accidentally discovered and unearthed in 1799 near Rosetta, Egypt, by French soldiers. The marvelous thing about this buried rock is that it bears a message written during the second century B.C. in two forms of Egyptian script - demotic and hieroglyphics.

When archeologists examined the rock, they were thrilled because the inscriptions would help solve a very perplexing mystery. Prior to 1799, archeologists could not read the clay tablets bearing Egyptian hieroglyphics because no one could decipher the language. When the Rosetta Stone was discovered and translated, the demotic inscriptions on the stone enabled Thomas Young (1773-1829) and J.F. Champollion (1790-1832) to decipher the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians.

In a similar way, God buried a set of four self-evident rules in the book of Daniel 2,600 years ago. By God's grace, I accidentally stumbled into this buried treasure. (Of course, the passage of time will prove or disprove the validity of my claim.) Four rules of interpretation have shattered centuries of prophetic exposition and tradition, because by definition, all prophetic interpretations are faulty and incomplete until the book of Daniel is *unsealed*. These four rules cover chronology, fulfillment, language and God's use of time.

God put these things in the book of Daniel to dethrone our traditions because *greater truth is*

God's gift to the honest in heart. Notice how this works: God separates people who hold to traditions from people who love truth by sending greater truth on the Earth. When greater truth comes along, the honest in heart rejoice to see it while those defending the traditions of the elders will rise up and punish those who embrace it. Yes, the parable of the math teacher is silly, but the moral of the story is painfully true.

I am out of space for now, but in next month's conclusion, I will discuss the four rules that unlock the book of Daniel and by extension, the book of Revelation.

Larry Wilson

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