

Perils of Prophecy – Days, Idioms and Covenants, Part 3



Ms. Smallback

Again, I want to emphasize, I'm an amateur here. These are just my own takes, my own thoughts about things I've studied. I'm not here to persuade or convince or sell anything. I've received numerous emails from people who have had their own takes on some of these things, and I've loved every one of them. It's been enlightening and encouraging to hear about your thoughts and read your emails. I'll probably incorporate a few of them I have found especially helpful.

I'm just sharing my own current understandings to give other angles to look at, and broaden the discussion in some ways, while narrowing it in others. And I'll say it again, I could be wrong.

With that said, I have a correction to last week's article concerning the dates of the Passover and Christ's crucifixion. I wrote: "Christ was crucified the 14th of Nisan, buried the 14, 15, 16 and rose on the 16th."

But it should have read Christ rose on the 17th – 17 Nisan. Like this:

"Christ was crucified the 14th of Nisan, buried the 14, 15, 16 and rose on the 17th."

I apologize for this error, as it was/is significant. It was not intentional.

Moving on...

No man knows the day or the hour

One of my favorite teachings of the return of Christ is the “no man knows the hour or the day” phrase.

Matt 24:36 [NASU] “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

This is a direct reference to the Feast of Rosh Hashanah, or the Feast of Trumpets. (Think about that for just a minute – where else are we keenly familiar with trumpets blowing?)

Avi Ben Mordechai explains that the Feasts/Festivals are appointed times that must be kept because they are holy convocations and rehearsals for the coming Messiah. The Israelites were to keep the appointments of each of the feasts given Moses in Leviticus 23 so they would be able to pass down to future generations the symbolism and signs to look for, know, and understand.

Lev 23:1-2, 4 [NASU]

The Lord spoke again to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The Lord’s appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations – My appointed times are these...These are the appointed times of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them.’”

*Remember that “convocation” means “something called out, a rehearsal”. What are they rehearsing? Various appointments God declares He will keep in the future.

In ancient Israel, they kept their times by the lunar cycles. Rosh Hashanah was the start of the new year on the civil

calendar. This particular holy day was announced differently than all the others. There were watchmen scattered in Israel, and they were to look for the sign of the new moon.

Every legal transaction in Israel was established by two (or more) witnesses. This was no different. And these witnesses had to be of good repute and character. The witnesses were to look for the correct sign in the sky of the new moon, and there were specific attributes they were to recognize. Mordechai explains it like this:

"In short, the two qualified witnesses usually stood before the Nassi or President of the Sanhedrin (Jewish high court) to give account of the moon's appearance prior to its becoming total dark. (Just before the moon's disk enters total darkness, there were tiny slivers of white on the edges of the waning disk. These were called the 'horns' of the moon."

When a witness observed the correct sign of the moon, he was to make haste for the Sanhedrin. He was questioned by the Sanhedrin as far as his witness, and then was set in a separate room to wait for a second witness. When a second witness arrived at the Sanhedrin, the same procedure occurred. If the two witnesses agreed, Rosh Hashanah was declared by the President proclaiming *Rosh Chodesh* (a complete cycle of the moon's renewal) by saying: "Sanctified." And all the people near him were to repeat, "Sanctified, sanctified." Then the watchmen in Jerusalem lit fires to signal to the Israelites in the country that Rosh Hashanah had begun. The signal fires were spread throughout the land to tell all of the Israelites in ancient Israel.

Rosh Hashanah was the only day on the Jewish calendar in ancient Israel that was proclaimed "spontaneously". It was the only festival that had two witnesses present to the head of the Sanhedrin, and it was the only festival the people did not know "the day or the hour" of. Even if they could count the lunar cycle and the day it was probable to turn, they

could not observe the actual festival (as in proclaim it and participate in its “rehearsal”) until it was proclaimed by the Sanhedrin President in Jerusalem.

Of course they knew it was coming, and could pretty accurately project its arrival, yet its arrival would not be official until the two witnesses presented the evidence and the proclamation was made. This phrase, “no one knows the day or hour” would resonate to an Israelite versed in ancient customs, that this was Rosh Hashanah.

This is called an idiom, a phrase or expression with a nonliteral meaning. By definition, an idiom is “a fixed distinctive expression whose meaning cannot be deduced from the combined meanings of its actual words.” [Encarta] And the Jewish faith is full of them. Israelites in Jesus’ day would have been familiar with this phrase. Modern Americans or non-Jews would not, unless they were taught customs of ancient Israel and their faith.

Personal Breakthrough

I think I’ve said before that I’ve studied Revelation and eschatology over two decades now, but most of the first half of that time was like plowing fallow ground. I just kept spinning teachings and doctrines around and around, trying to make sense of things, thinking I was finally understanding but then finding something else that contradicted it.

The problem is, when I read the Scriptures myself, I had to contort them to fit the eschatology teachings of the modern church into them. (The Left Behind series was a serious disservice to the Word of God; I’m just going to put that out there. And all the doctrine that that was based on permeated the western church when I was in it.) There was probably more unlearning I had to do than learning.

It wasn’t until I sat under some Hebrew teachings that things began to make sense. I’d like to tell the revelation of that

sometime, but I'm going to save it for now.

The breakthroughs in understanding I began to have really only happened when I let go of what the western church was promoting, and began waiting on the Spirit and those He brought to me to expound to me.

God's Covenant Never Fails on His End

I don't subscribe to the theory that Christians replace Israel. It's not that aspects of that aren't true, because some are. But I reject the whole of it. I don't know why we can't let God's words stand for themselves without encircling them with doctrinal fence posts and staking a doctrinal theory on them. Can two seeming opposing truths stand? I believe they can. The error comes in the interpretation, not the conflict.

I can rest assured that if there is error, it is on the part of my understanding, not God's intentions or doings.

For example, Proverbs 26:4-5 [NKJV] reads: *"Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."*

Well which is it? Do we answer a fool according to his folly or do we not?

I'm just saying, sometimes accepting two truths as both true is the wiser action. Then you let the Creator illuminate the application of each truth in its intended path.

God made a few covenants at different times with different people. Except for the covenant He made with the Israelites on Mount Horeb, which was broken by the Israelites failure to uphold their end, none of the other covenants have been broken.

In Genesis 17, we read that God covenanted with Abraham, and that promise would pass to his son Isaac. Then God reiterated

that same covenant with Abraham's bloodline through his grandson Jacob in Genesis 28. This covenant precedes the covenant with the Israelites through Moses, and stands separate from it. See Genesis 17:4-8 [NASU] – emphasis mine:

“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

*“I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. **I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.**”*

Later we read these strong words from Jeremiah 31:35-36 [NASU]

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.”

From this we can see God's covenant of Israel being a nation (the Abrahamic Covenant) is eternal. This one cannot and will not be altered.

To get the context, go back a few verses, and you'll see that God addresses the separate houses of Israel (and this is kind of a big deal to me): the house of Israel (ten tribes) and the house of Judah (two tribes). And God tells them He's going to make a new covenant with these two houses, and He

clearly differentiates that this new covenant is separate from the one they broke when they left Egypt, which is the Mosaic covenant. Jeremiah 31:31-33 [NASU] – emphasis mine:

“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...

And this is the foreshadowing of the new covenant that will come from the Messiah centuries later. So from these passages, we can see the Abrahamic covenant stands as long as the sun, moon, stars and sea continue in their appointed positions, but that there will also be a new covenant to replace the Mosaic covenant which was broken.

Yet we can see this new covenant will be made with the “house of Israel and with the house of Judah”, so God’s chosen people have **not** been cut off, yet we can also know Gentiles outside the houses of Judah and Israel have been grafted in.

Look at what Matthew Henry says about this passage, written in 1706, long before Israel returned to its promised borders (partially):

As surely as the heavenly bodies will continue their settled course, according to the will of their Creator, to the end of time, and as the raging sea obeys him, so surely will the Jews be continued a separate people. Words can scarcely set forth more strongly the restoration of Israel. The rebuilding of Jerusalem, and its enlargement and establishment, shall be an earnest of the great things God will do for the gospel church. The personal happiness of every true believer, as well as the future restoration of Israel, is secured by promise, covenant,

and oath. This Divine love passes knowledge; and to those who take hold upon it, every present mercy is an earnest of salvation.

Two truths. The Church is the recipient of the New Covenant. The houses of Israel and Judah are the recipients of the New Covenant. That's going to be hard for some to swallow. I had to rethink a lot of things myself, but I can't negate one to elucidate another.

[Here](#) is a document of an overview of the covenants in Scripture, and [here](#) are the scriptures written out.

Keep these covenants in the back of your mind, because I will refer to them here and there, and we'll see they play a prophetic role as well.

Two Witnesses of Revelation 11

I reserve the right to change my mind, but at my current writing, this is who I believe are the two witnesses of Revelation 11: the Christian and Jewish churches.

Remember in Rev. 11:4 the messenger calls these two witnesses the "two olive trees and two lampstands"... We learn in Revelation 1:20 that the "lampstands" (candlesticks) are churches, and we learn in Romans 11:17-24 that olive trees are the Gentile believers and the Jews.

This inevitably leads to the question of the 1260 days of their prophesying, and then their death. I'll circle back to this later, but for now, read [this overview](#) for points to consider. And then read [this](#) to understand their bodies lying dead. [The author of these is Ellis Skolfield.]

And...

Finally, I received a fascinating breakdown of the Jubilees and their timing from a reader in Oregon. I'm excited to pass it along to anyone who has interest. Just let me know.

I've been called to five possible weeks of jury duty, so I'm not sure how much time I'll have to write, but the next topic I'd like to cover is a pretty recent revelation I've had of Gog/Magog. I am sure someone out there will have deeper understanding than what I have, and am looking forward to hearing others' thoughts on that or other prophecy, and your own revelations as well. Thank you for your grace to me as I share this process of learning with you.

© 2020 NWV – All Rights Reserved

E-Mail Ms. Smallback: M.Smallback@cox.net

To read Part 2, click [HERE](#)

To read Part 1, click [HERE](#)