

The Perils of Prophecy



Ms. Smallback

Writing about Biblical prophecy is an invitation for criticism (and rightfully so), but it's so fascinating to me, I think I'll go there – with some disclaimers. I've been studying eschatology (end times theology) for about two decades now, and I've been really, really wrong in that course of time. I may be really, really wrong now. But I keep studying, and I keep trying because I've learned something that drives me: the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. [Rev. 19:10]

Barnes' says prophecy is making known the divine will of God, and John records the angel as saying who Christ is expresses the divine will of God. So in studying it, I glean and gain insight into the nature of God and the person of Christ. Which means all the errors I make and the lessons I learn bring me a better understanding of my God.

In prophecy, if we don't learn more about Christ and His nature, we are missing the point and I question whether we have really learned anything.

I'm not going to spend time on preterism (past), historicism (present), idealism (timeless), and futurism (future) theories because they exhaust me. I'm just going to tell you what I believe (right now) and why, and leave the categories for someone else. Also, I don't have time here to explain why I don't believe some things, so for now I'm just going to explain what I do believe and why.

And I'm going to tell you my take on prophecy just as fodder for your spirit, not to convince anyone of anything or sell a book.

Acharit-hayamim...the last days

There's a phrase in the ancient text called "acharit-hayamim" that is so unique The Complete Jewish Bible doesn't even attempt to translate it. They leave it in the text in the original Hebrew. (It's considered so unique that an English translation can't quite capture it.)

You'll find it fourteen times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New. Every other Bible translation translates it something the equivalent of "last days". You can view or download a word document with the twenty-one acharit-hayamim scriptures [here](#).

I believe the "last days" are the times on earth from Christ's first advent to His second, because of 1 Peter 1:20.

Time is continuum, is cyclical and circular, not so much lineal

We use the concept of time to measure history. If we'd learn to view time and history with God's eyes, our entire viewpoint would change for the better. Here are some concepts the Spirit showed me and taught me to dwell on so I could better understand the nature of God...

That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one might say, "See this, it is new"? Already it has existed for ages which were before us. There is no remembrance of earlier things; and also of the later things which will occur, there will be for them no remembrance among those who will come later still. –Ecclesiastes 1:9-11 [NASU]

Basically this shows us everything repeats and is on a revolution, or cycles. Moreover, we don't seem to bring to mind historical events and lessons or learn how to apply those lessons to our present or future. God had me camp out on this for a long, long time. He told me it was key for understanding how He operates.

For a moment, let's just look at one word in this passage: ages. "Already it has existed for ages which were before us." This is a hard word to translate in this passage. Most translations have "ages", while some have "ancient times" or "old time". But the original Hebrew is "owlam" [Strong's 5769] and is defined as "properly, concealed, i.e. the vanishing point; generally, time out of mind (past or future)".

So the things that happened in the past, in the ancient times or old time, are concealed; they have extended beyond the vanishing point and are "time out of mind". And apparently we're prone to forget them. Just keep that in the back of your head. Now look at Isaiah 46:8-10 [NASU]; this is God speaking:

Remember this, and be assured; recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ' My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

Here God is telling us to remember those things from "owlam", ages past. He is chastising us to remember the things forgotten from a time out of our minds, beyond the vanishing point and that have been concealed. He compounds this with His identity, and this is very important! **He is the God of ancient things that have been concealed and vanished.** And here's where it gets really interesting...

“for I am God, and there is no other”... God here is “el”, the Almighty. There is only **one** Almighty.

“I am God and there is none like Me”... God here is “elohiym”, which can be used for any god, (and the people were prone to worshipping other lesser gods), but He distinguishes here that among the gods, there is **NONE** like Himself. And that word for “none” there doesn’t mean just zero, it means never existed. So while there may indeed be other “gods” that man worships, no other god has existed to equal Himself. Selah.

He then tells us He declares the thing at the end from that at the beginning. And this time “ancient times” comes from “qedem” which means “front” – things literally before other things – and He distinguishes those things from things that haven’t yet occurred.

Now if you really want to stretch your mind, look at this, and we have to take it from the KJV because no one else except the Jewish Bible gets it right unless you go back to the original Hebrew:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. –Rev 13:8

So what we see here is the sacrificial Lamb was slain from the very beginning, before there was time. [The Hebrew confirms this, and I can only assume man, in his finite “wisdom”, thought they had to correct it because it didn’t make sense to their lineal thinking.] I need you to understand time is circular, and the very concept of Christ’s sacrifice occurred before Adam and Eve.

Now look at 1 Peter 1:20 [KJV]:

Who [Christ] verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times [archarit-hayamim] for you...

We will see again that Christ was not an answer to a sin solution after four thousand years of trying to get it right by the Law or other means. The answer existed before the problem. Peter explains here that Christ was destined for the earth specifically for the “last days”, the acharit-hayamim.

And just for kicks, that word “verily” is an adjective used to indicate affirmation or concession, which is “usually followed by a contrasted clause”. In other words, when verily precedes a statement, there is a contrast that we will be disinclined to believe, but is true nonetheless.

Getting a grasp of God’s concept of revolutions and cycles of “time” will help us understand both prophecy and the present, not to mention the character of God.

Bifids and Chiasms

Considering the Israelites/Hebrews were instructed by God and His chosen people at a time the world was following other gods and the flesh, taking an honest look at the Israelites’ methods and customs would aide us considerably at understanding God.

A bifid is a literary piece that is divided into two parts that are repetitive. One part tells its story, and then it tells it again in the other part. They are not two different stories, per se, but two different ways of telling the same thing. Isaiah is considered bifidic. Chapters 1-33 tell a story, and then chapters 35-66 repeat it in a different way.

A chiasm is a stair step approach at writing where a concept is written, then repeated in reverse form, like this:

The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desires to dwell in... [Ps. 68:15-16]

Now look at it:

A The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan;
B an high hill as the hill of Bashan.
B Why leap ye, ye high hills?
A this is the hill which God desires to dwell in...

In A you see the hill of God is the hill God desires to dwell in, and in B you see the hill is high – on both sides – it steps up, then repeats down.

Look at it in Isaiah 55:8... “My ways are not your ways, [now watch it repeat in opposite order] neither are your ways my ways...” [my ways/your ways/your ways/my ways]

Even the New Testament writers did the same thing. Look at Mark 5:3-5, and this one has three steps instead of two. You make three points, then repeat them in reverse order:

“Who had his dwelling among the tombs

And no man could bind him,

No, not with chains.

He had been bound with chains,

Neither could any man tame him,

And always he was in the tombs...”

Now at first this may look like a simple poetic scheme, but it's more than that. The Hebrew writers also wrote whole books like this. You can find chiasms by chapters in Isaiah and Daniel. You can also find them in Revelation. Just for example, look at Daniel. If you pay attention you'll see Daniel is not in chronological order. This is a clue.

Chronologically, Daniel actually wrote the book like this: Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 5,9, 6, 10, 11, 12. You can tell this because Daniel always has “time markers” for his visions. “In the second year of the reign of

Nebuchadnezzar..." etc. You can historically look up those markers and see the chapters are out of chronological order.

Daniel wrote the book in a chronological order, but Daniel put the book together in chiastic form. Why? Because it tells a story, and his Hebrew readers would understand that story is retold in reverse order. We have to get out of a Greek mindset of lineal thinking and seek a Hebrew mindset if we want greater understanding. Now look at Daniel:

<u>Prophecy</u>		<u>Subject</u>	
A	ch. 2	the great image	4
gentile nations			
B	ch. 3	the fiery furnace	God's
people in tribulation			
C	ch. 4	Nebuch.insane	
Gentile king judged			
C	ch. 5	Beleshaz.killed	
Gentile king judged			
B	ch. 6	lion's den	
God's people in tribulation			
A	ch. 7	4 beasts	
4 Gentile nations			

Do you see it? Now consider that Revelation is written similarly, by John, an Israelite, familiar with Hebraic literary form and how Israelites think.

Revelation 10:6-7 tells us time ceases at 11:15. But there are eleven more chapters of Revelation. So Revelation must not be on a linear timeline. When you realize this, you learn to start looking for things that repeat, and the methods they repeat. These are clues for interpretation AND order.

Speaking of Hebrew customs and methods...

We have the whole concept of measuring time and marking events based on an entirely different counting system. The Hebrews kept a lunar calendar, as instructed by God, and the rest of the world keeps a solar calendar, as instructed by, well... we won't get into that right now.

But just look at the days of creation. We find, "and there was evening and there was morning, the first [second, third, etc.] day." We usually operate like there was morning and there was evening...

Do a cursory word search of "moon" in Scripture and you'll find the feasts and events were marked by the new or full moon. Jeremiah 31:35 tells us God has a "fixed order of the moon". Yet the world has set up its calendar and its events by the sun.

Take a look at the Hebrew calendar and you'll see the months run differently than ours, and that the new year is different than ours. The calendar new year on the Hebrew calendar is in fall [Tishri = Sept/Oct], while on the solar calendar it is in winter [Jan 1]. Interestingly, the Hebrews' religious calendar's new year was Nisan [Mar/Apr], and the world's used to be April 1. [But the Romans changed it to January 1 to follow the Egyptian solar way of counting.](#) Those who resisted the new calendar's New Year's Day were called April Fools, because they kept the original calendar new year as April 1.

God ordained seven feasts in Leviticus 23. The word for "feast" is "mowed" and literally means "an appointment", and the Hebrews considered them the equivalent of a dress rehearsal for a future event. There are four spring feasts [Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits and Pentecost] and three autumn feasts [Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot].

Each of these Hebrew customs are clues to understanding God, who He is, and what He is saying and doing.

I do not think that word means what you think it means....

Gen 2:16-17 [NASU]

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Well, either Adam died that day, or God meant something else, because we know God does not lie. We also know Adam didn't die that day. So what did God mean?

Gen 6:3-4 [NASU]

Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

Well, either man's lifespan ended at 120 years after that point, or God meant something else, because we know God does not lie. We know man lived over 120 years after that point, so what did God mean?

Full circle, literally...

I realize I've had to practically bullet point these ideas, but I'm just offering some starting place counter points to western Christianity's maddening eschatology false teachings. Those who insist that all prophecy was fulfilled in 70 A.D. fail to understand the cyclical and chiastic structure of both prophecy and historical events. Likewise, those who insist prophecy has some futuristic fulfillment yet disregard historical evidence of fulfillments have failed in the same misunderstanding.

God has shown us and history has proven there are cycles that repeat. Isaiah is considered the "little Bible". It sets forth types and symbols, using old events to prophesy new. Isaiah used people of his day to prophesy about people in the

future. Both sets of circumstances are true, but each set has its own application.

I'll close with this and write more details in a future article for better understanding if there is an interest. Recall this: Simeon and Anna both knew the Messiah would come in their day. How did they know? Besides the Holy Spirit, how did they really know?

God told me years ago, "Study the first advent to understand the second." I've dropped clues throughout this article. I'll fill in some details in the next.

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