

Three Dangers of Illuminating Bible Prophecy with One's Own Light

By Jonathan Brentner, 23 July, 2022

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CCPO Ed. Note: Do you wonder why so few Christians understand the “signs of the times” in which we live today (cf. Matthew 16:2-3)? It is because so few churches today teach Bible prophecy at all, fewer still, from a literal viewpoint, that is, that God means exactly what He says in His Word. In the same way that Jesus literally fulfilled hundreds of Old Testament prophecies at His First Coming, so will He at his Second – Maranatha!

Back in my early Sunday school days, we sang *The B-I-B-L-E*. I still remember jumping to my feet at the words “I stand alone on the Word of God, the B-I-B-L-E.” Little did I know at the time that the words to this song would characterize my ministry so many decades later.

If you were to ask me why I believe what I do about Jesus’ imminent appearing and His future reign over a gloriously restored Israel, I would reply that the words of Scripture are my source of confidence. I stand on the promises of God’s Word. I love how the words of Psalm 119:105 speak to the light that comes from Scripture:

*Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.*

The Bible guides us through life; it lights our way. We rely on its promises for our hope of eternal life. Its words give us hope in perilous times and comfort us amid all our affliction.

The Reformers of five hundred years ago summarized the importance of sound Bible interpretation with two principles: *Sola Scriptura* and Scripture interprets Scripture. Although the Reformers remained steadfast in their rejection of a literal millennium (amillennialism), which John described in Revelation 20:1-10, those two principles later led to the revival of premillennialism as well as to the emergence of teaching in support of a pretribulation Rapture. This happened as students of God’s Word allowed Scripture to speak for itself and did not retrofit the biblical text with meanings foreign to the original intent of the author. They adhered to *Sola Scriptura*.

Though the modern-day scoffers will surely say otherwise, they have ceased allowing God’s Word to be their sole light when it comes biblical prophecy. It’s been the casting aside of *sola Scriptura* as well as the principle of Scripture interprets Scripture that has directly led to the reemergence of amillennialism, and the rejection of teaching related to the Rapture. *Rather than allow God’s Word to illumine their way, they have lit their own fires and allowed their own light to guide them.* What are the dangers of interpreting Bible prophecy with one’s own light?

1. An Unwillingness To Interpret Scripture By The Light It Provides

In Isaiah 50:10-11, we find these insightful words:

Who among you fears the Lord

*and obeys the voice of his servant?
Let him who walks in darkness
and has no light
trust in the name of the Lord
and rely on his God.
Behold, all you who kindle a fire,
who equip yourselves with burning torches!
Walk by the light of your fire,
and by the torches that you have kindled!
This you have from my hand:
you shall lie down in torment.*

I recognize that the context of Isaiah 50 refers to those who dismiss the Lord and all of His ways. Rather than trust the Lord and walk by the light of His revealed Word, including what came through the prophets of their day, the ancient Israelites used the light of their own fires, or torches, to illuminate their paths. However, I believe we can apply the words of this text to those who dismiss the words of Scripture regarding the future restoration of Israel and Jesus' imminent appearing. When it comes to Bible prophecy, many pastors and teachers obscure the original intent of authors at the time God inspired them. *Instead, they light "the torch" of human wisdom and allow that to illuminate their way through the prophetic texts. They walk by the light that they themselves have kindled.*

Over the past several decades, I have heard or read a wide variety of arguments as to why people follow the path of their own fires when interpreting the prophetic texts of God's Word. They all have three things in common:

1. They submit Bible passages regarding the end times to human wisdom for a wide variety of reasons.
2. They most often employ an allegorical, or symbolical, approach to biblical prophecy that enables them to justify their own understanding of how God should wrap things up at the end of the age. They tell you that the words on the page of the biblical text do not really mean what they seem to tell us.
3. Pride in their personal paradigm of reinterpreting prophecy keeps them from submitting their ideas to the words of Scripture.

Those who light their own way through the prophetic texts of the Bible exhibit an unwillingness to interpret Scripture by the light it provides. I have reached the conclusion that the lit torch of allegorical interpretation is the only way that one can arrive at the destination of amillennialism because it retrofits the words scriptural prophecy with meanings foreign to the authors at that time they wrote.

2. The Allowing of Allegory to Trump the Clear Meaning of Words

The meaning of the words of Scripture matter greatly when we look at the promises regarding our salvation and hope of eternal life in heaven. Why shouldn't that be the same for the prophetic texts of the Bible?...

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