

Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Why Study Biblical Prophecy? Part 2

By Renald E. Showers

In our previous article, we noted four negative attitudes that people have toward the study of biblical prophecy. These negative attitudes are unfortunate, because there are significant reasons why the study of biblical prophecy is important. This present article will present three of those reasons.

First, one-fifth to one-fourth of the Bible is prophecy. In light of this, those people who reject the study of biblical prophecy because of a negative attitude toward it choose to avoid twenty to twenty-five per cent of the biblical revelation that God has given to mankind—revelation that God wants human beings to possess and heed. This avoidance amounts to willful rejection of a major portion of God’s truth and, therefore, has serious implications.

Second, it is impossible to understand God’s purpose for history apart from the study of biblical prophecy. Isaiah 46:9-11 quotes the following divine declaration:

“I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:...I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”

Isaiah 14:24, 26-27 states, “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:...This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”

These Scriptures reveal that there is one true God, and that He has a sovereign purpose for this earth’s history. The evidence that He is the true God and that He has a sovereign purpose for history is this:

In the past He planned and purposed what would happen on earth throughout history. On the basis of what He planned and purposed, through His prophets God declared to mankind what would happen in the future, even to the end of this earth’s history. Then, during the course of history, He sovereignly causes to happen all that He planned and purposed and declared through His prophets. No one can prevent God from fulfilling His sovereign purpose for history.

Nebuchadnezzar, ancient Babylon’s greatest king, learned by personal experience that the God of the Bible has a sovereign purpose for what happens in history.

After God had completed His infliction of the king with a form of mental illness that caused him to live like a wild animal, Nebuchadnezzar wrote the following:

“I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Daniel 4:34-35).

The prophetic Scriptures are the written record of what God through the prophets declared to mankind would happen even to the end of this earth’s history.

Since those divine declarations were based upon what God had planned and purposed for history, no one can understand God’s purpose for history apart from the study of biblical prophecy.

In light of the facts that God has a sovereign purpose for this earth’s history; that on the basis of that purpose He declared to mankind what would happen to the end of history; and that the prophetic Scriptures are the written record of that divine declaration, it is no mistake that the Book of Revelation was the last book of the Bible written.

God intended it to be the capstone of His divine declaration to mankind, because it foretells how He will complete His purpose for history. Because this is so, the person who decides to avoid the study of Revelation will remain completely oblivious to how God will complete His purpose.

Third, the study of biblical prophecy is an effective evangelistic tool. God had His declarations of future events recorded in written form in the Scriptures, not to satisfy the curiosity of people concerning what will happen, but to be a life-changing tool for people of every generation.

God uses the study of biblical prophecy to serve as a warning to unsaved people: To warn them of the future wrathful judgment that He has purposed for this rebellious world and for all people who fail to receive His gracious gift of salvation through faith in His crucified, buried and resurrected Son, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit uses biblical prophecy to impress unsaved people with the urgency of their trusting Christ as their Savior now, before it may be too late for them.

I personally have witnessed people coming to a personal saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through the study and teaching of biblical prophecy. For example:

One church that had asked me to conduct a prophecy conference urged its people to invite unsaved acquaintances to the sessions. One woman invited her eight fellow office-workers to attend the conference. Every one of them came, and all eight trusted Christ as Savior. At the same conference, a believer, who was a custodian at a public school, brought the unsaved superintendent of that city’s public school system to the conference men’s breakfast. In response to the study from biblical prophecy that was presented at that breakfast, the superintendent placed his faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Any Christian who avoids the study and teaching of biblical prophecy thereby fails to use an effective evangelistic tool that God has given to us.

Hezbollah has plans for Israel on the Golan

Analysis: Israel had better pay attention to the emerging reality on its Syria border in the Golan Heights, where the Lebanese terror group is attempting to get a foothold; the Iranian-backed organization is up to its neck in problems at home and finds the Syrian frontier to be a more comfortable location from which to take on the Jewish state.

Yossi Yehoshua Published: 02.13.19

While Hamas attempts to incrementally turn up the heat in the riots among Israel's Gaza border, the "Palestinian night squads" have resumed their evening protests along the security fence, disrupting the Israel Defense Forces' routine activity. But Israel had better pay attention to the emerging reality on its Syria border in the Golan Heights where Hezbollah has been attempting to tighten its grip exactly as it did four years ago.

According to Syrian reports, IDF tanks on Monday evening fired artillery rounds at "a demolished hospital" in Syria's southern Quneitra province near the border with Israel, causing material damage. It was also reported that Israel hit a military observation post in the border village of Jabta Elhashab. Some reports say the post belonged to "local activists," but it more likely belonged to Hezbollah, which is trying to regain its hold in the Syrian Golan Heights.

While the IDF maintained a policy of ambiguity over Monday's strike, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did confirm that Israel had attacked Iranian targets in Syria, just he assumed responsibility for previous attacks over the few past weeks.

Hezbollah is trying to entrench itself in Syria, after Syrian President Bashar Assad has reclaimed the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, precisely as it did between 2014-2015. This was when one of the terror organization's more prominent members, Jihad Mughniyeh, was appointed by Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force to be in charge of the Golan Heights area and planning terror attacks against Israeli civilians.

But Jihad was killed in a 2015 airstrike attributed to Israel. His father, Hezbollah military and intelligence chief Imad Mughniyeh, was who also killed in an alleged Israeli operation in 2008.

In retribution for Jihad's death, Hezbollah staged an ambush of an IDF convoy near the Har Dov area, in close proximity to the Lebanese border, firing Kornet anti-tank missiles at the passing troops. The strike was followed by mortar fire coming in from Lebanon onto Mount Hermon after the IDF responded to the attack. Giva'ati Company Commander Major Yohai Kalangel and Sergeant Dor Nini were killed and seven others were injured in the incident.

Hezbollah has recently announced it intends to release footage of that incident, which is considered the gravest since the 2006 Second Lebanon War.

The IDF has yet to comment on the terrorist group's announcement, however, the army has confirmed Hezbollah's attempts to base itself across Syrian villages over the past few months, operating against Israel in an area that is not bound by UN resolutions, unlike the Israel-Lebanon border. In addition, an increase in the number of incidents along the Syrian border was noted over the past two months, with the Israeli strikes in Syria for which no one assumed responsibility meant to signal the enemy that it is best not cross any red lines. This is similar to the message Jerusalem conveyed to Iran when it attempted to entrench itself in Syria and was pushed out of there after a series of Israeli airstrikes.

Unlike the situation of four years ago, Iran has a rare presence along the Syrian border, while Hezbollah is working to resume its confrontations with Israel. But since the organization is up to its neck in domestic problems and cannot allow itself to face Israel on the Lebanese front, it finds Syria to be a more comfortable staging ground from which to take on the Jewish state.

After Signing One-World Religion Covenant, Pope Francis Makes His Next Push

12:00PM EST 2/13/2019 MICHAEL SNYDER

Just days after the pope signed the most important interfaith document in history, he had the opportunity to address global political leaders by video at the World Government Summit in Dubai. During his remarks he once again stressed the need for global unity, and he encouraged those attending to embrace "sustainable development", but he also stressed that sustainable development will never succeed without "solidarity".

Of course most Americans don't even know that a "World Government Summit" even exists because the mainstream media in the U.S. doesn't really talk about it, but it is actually a very big deal. And obviously the pope feels very strongly about what they are trying to do, because he took time out of his very busy schedule to record a video message for them:

World leaders are currently meeting at the World Government Summit, taking place in Dubai from 10-12 February. In his video message, Pope Francis greets those participating in the summit, and recalls his own visit to the United Arab Emirates earlier this month. "I encountered a modern country which is looking to the future without forgetting its roots," he said. "I also saw how even in the desert the flowers spring up and grow. I returned home with the hope that many deserts in the world can bloom like this."

The World Government Summit is an annual event, and it attracts leaders from all over the globe who are interested in a more integrated planet. Here is a little blurb about the summit from Wikipedia:

"The World Government Summit is an annual event held in Dubai, UAE. It brings together leaders in government for a global dialogue about governmental process and policies with a focus on the issues of futurism, technology and innovation, as well as other topics. The summit acts as a knowledge exchange hub between government officials, thought leaders, policy makers and private sector leaders, and as an analysis platform for the future trends, issues and opportunities facing humanity. The summit hosts over 90 speakers from 150 participating countries along with over 4000 attendees."

In general, the pope's remarks were quite similar to what we have heard before, but I thought that two buzzwords that he used were quite noteworthy:

The Holy Father emphasized that "we cannot really speak of sustainable development without solidarity." He concluded his message with by thanking those taking part, and with the prayer that the Lord might bless their commitment "for a more just and prosperous world for everyone".

The phrase "sustainable development" has become a shorthand way of referring to the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals. It is a 17-point plan, and if you read the entire thing, you quickly realize that it encompasses just about every realm of human activity that you can possibly imagine.

It is not just a plan to fight climate change. It is actually a comprehensive blueprint for global governance, and it envisions a much larger role for global institutions such as the U.N. in the years ahead.

But in the context of speaking about "sustainable development," the pope once again used the term

"solidarity." This is a word that he has been using a lot lately, and when he uses it, he is referring to the need for global unity. More specifically, he almost always uses this buzzword when speaking of the need for global religious unity.

Last Monday, the pope and the highest imam in Sunni Islam signed a covenant which boldly declares that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, and that it is God's will that all of the various major religions in the world co-exist peacefully. For much more on this, please see my previous article entitled "The Pope and Islam's Most Important Imam Just Signed a Covenant That Pushes Us Much Closer to a One-World Religion".

Referencing the biblical story of Noah, the pope suggested that, in order to safeguard peace, we too "need to enter together as one family into an ark which can sail the stormy seas of the world." This means acknowledging, "God is at the origin of the one human family." "No violence can be justified in the name of religion," he said.

"Religious behavior," said Pope Francis, "needs continually to be purified from the recurrent temptation to judge others as enemies and adversaries." The "perspective of heaven," he said, "embraces persons without privilege or discrimination."

But all of this comes at a time of great controversy for Catholicism.

This week, the Vatican sought to clarify what Pope Francis meant when he stated that some nuns in France had been subjected to "sexual slavery":

The Vatican on Wednesday clarified comments by Pope Francis about a case of what he called "sexual slavery" within a French congregation of nuns, saying he was referring to an abuse of power that was reflected in instances of sexual abuse.

Francis cited the case when responding to a question about the sexual abuse of nuns by clergy during a press conference Tuesday returning home from the United Arab Emirates. It was the pope's first-ever public acknowledgment of the problem of priests and bishops sexually abusing nuns. He stressed that the Vatican had been confronting the issue for some time and vowed to do more.

We live at a time when everything is being shaken, and our religious institutions are certainly not exempt.

Without a doubt, this pope is going to continue to push for global religious unity, and that has enormous implications.

Our world is becoming a smaller place with each passing day, and many are deeply concerned about what this trend toward "global oneness" will ultimately bring.

Millennials & Evangelism: The Plague of Emotivism

In 1957, the social psychologist Leon Festinger coined the term "cognitive dissonance" to describe the stress that results from holding two or more contradictory beliefs at the same time.

According to Festinger, people will attempt to alleviate the stress by either changing their minds about one of the ideas or, more commonly, convincing themselves the ideas really aren't contradictory. The latter usually results in an incoherent mess, something a recent Barna report amply demonstrates.

The report, entitled "Reviving Evangelism," found that virtually every practicing American Christian believes that "part of their faith means being a witness about Jesus." Similarly, virtually all of them agree that "the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to know Jesus."

This sounds like a solid foundation for "reviving evangelism," doesn't it? Yet, the same study found that "nearly half (47 percent) of practicing Christian millennials--churchgoers who consider religion an important part of their lives--believe that evangelism is wrong."

Specifically, they believe it's "wrong to share one's personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes they will one day share the same faith."

If you're wondering how one can simultaneously believe that knowing Jesus is the best thing that could happen to a person and that telling that same person about Jesus is somehow wrong, you understand what cognitive dissonance means.

Making matters even more, well, dissonant, is that the same group "is more likely than any other generation to say they are gifted at sharing their faith." Nearly three quarters of them describe themselves that way.

At this point, it's tempting to talk about how participation trophies and self-affirmation statements have ruined the millennials. But the problem isn't our misguided strategies of boosting this generation's self-esteem. The problem is theological anemia.

Specifically, it's a failure of catechesis.

Evangelizing like you mean it requires going against the cultural grain. As Barna president David Kinnaman told Christianity Today, "Cultivating deep, steady, resilient Christian conviction is difficult in a world of 'you do you' and 'don't criticize anyone else's life choices' and emotivism, the feelings-first priority that our culture makes a way of life."

Notre Dame philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has suggested that emotivism is at the heart of our current post-truth culture, and turns all statements about the good and the true into mere claims of personal preference.

Overall, the church has done a poor job of catechizing both ourselves and future generations against emotivism. In fact, as writer Samuel James argued, "The data here strongly suggests that Christian millennials are being catechized by their colleges, not churches."

Actually, I would argue that across our culture, emotivism is pushed on us way before college, and too often, it's even pushed by churches when they talk about "knowing Jesus."

What is meant by "knowing Jesus" by so many Christians is closer to "I love Swiss Almond Vanilla ice cream" than it is what the Apostles meant by it. It indicates a strong preference, but not a life-altering conviction.

The late biblical scholar Francis Martin used to tell his students "Christianity is a way of knowing, not a warm fuzzy." By "way of knowing" he meant something akin to what we at the Colson Center mean by "worldview": the truth about God, creation, and ourselves as ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ.

That's not to say our faith isn't personal. Of course it is, but for the New Testament writers, "knowing" God and Jesus Christ whom He sent isn't about making us feel good. It's about being rescued from the dominion of darkness for the kingdom of Christ.

When was the last time you heard Christianity described this starkly? If we can't remember, then we ought not be surprised by the cognitive dissonance described by the Barna report.

Christian grocery store owner receives death threat for 'Hell has open borders' ad

Christian grocery store owner receives death threat for 'Hell has open borders' ad

By Michael Gryboski, Christian Post Reporter



A weekly ad from 2019 by a family-owned Christian grocery store chain called Mac's Fresh Market.

The Christian owner of a grocery store chain received a death threat in response to a message on his weekly ad mailer that featured a statement about Heaven, Hell and border walls.

Mac's Cash Savers, which has grocery stores in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, sent the weekly ad, which in addition to noting prices for certain products also included the statement "Heaven has a wall, a gate and a strict immigration policy. Hell has open borders. Let that sink in."

Reggy McDaniel, owner of Mac's, told The Christian Post in an interview Monday afternoon that the chief purpose of the ad was "to get people to thinking about their salvation."

The mailer has garnered national headlines by media outlets that are drawing attention to the few who've voiced their objections to the ad's message.

"Please remove me from any mailers. I will no longer shop in your store. I find your mixture of religion and politics disgusting," one person lamented, according to Fox News.

McDaniel explained to CP that each week's mailer ad includes a message "to get [people] to thinking about how they are going to get in them Pearly Gates up there, in Heaven. And the only way they are going to get in them is through Jesus Christ."

McDaniel noted that the statement was not meant to be political, saying that it was a coincidence that it was published in an ad running at "a time when the border issue was a deal," adding that "I saw that statement around for a long time."

One weekly mailer ad released last month had the statement "Today, spend some time alone with Christ and experience joy that is full of pleasures that are eternal."

Another weekly ad from last year read "It is possible to pollute the water of the source, through rebellion. Obedience to God is a key to true satisfaction."

"I thought it was a really good Christian statement that Heaven has gates and borders and it does have a strict immigration policy: you've got to believe in the Son, Jesus Christ, or you don't get there," McDaniel said.

McDaniel also took issue with the claim that the statement was racist or xenophobic, telling CP that there nothing racial about it.

“It ain’t talking about one color getting to Heaven,” added McDaniel. “I don’t care what color you are. As a matter of fact, Jesus wasn’t white come to think of it.”

Regarding backlash, McDaniel estimated that 85 to 90 percent of the feedback he's received was positive in nature. He said he had gotten one death threat, but brushed it off, saying “we’ve had them before.”