

The Big Picture - Chapter One

from Doug Perry, www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com

In my humble opinion, one of the big roadblocks to understanding the Bible is the tendency to see stories in the Bible as only having application to that particular person or audience or time period.

There were certainly things that prophets said to a particular person that only had application that one time, but it makes sense to me that if it made it into the Bible, it had a wider audience to whom it would apply. A lot of time has been spent arguing about "replacement theology," that is, whether the modern church has inherited the promises of the children of Israel and thus the Old Testament applies to the modern church. Some for and some against. It divides up the Body of Christ into camps that won't even talk to each other any more.

There's also a LOT of arguing about whether the book of Revelations (and Ezekiel and Daniel and others) is about something that happened in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans or if it is about some future event in history - or both. A lot of wasted time being distracted with this that could have been spent spreading the Gospel. A lot of best selling books, tapes, videos, etc., that sucked money away from more pressing needs.

Look, I'm just a businessman that was given some insight. I was allowed to see a little bit more of the big picture. All the glory to God, it's not by MY power, that's for sure. My brain tends to process things in equations, as math problems. I see much of the Bible as computer code. That is, it's a lot of "If/Then" statements. IF you will abide in me, THEN I will abide in you. IF you lie, steal, envy, murder, commit adultery (etc.), THEN bad things will happen. IF you have other gods before me, THEN there will be trouble for your land. IF you will humble yourselves and seek my face, THEN I will restore your land. See? The whole thing is full of them. It's all full of formulas. All interconnected.

The thing with code like that is that the variables you input affect the output, but they don't affect the equation. I know this is a little hard to follow. Let's try it this way.

If you have a behavior for which God has said there will be a specific consequence and you do that behavior a lot more, you should expect a lot more consequence.

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Behavior A} \times 1 &= \text{Consequence B} \times 1 \\ \text{Behavior A} \times 100 &= \text{Consequence B} \times 100 \\ \text{Behavior A} \times 1,000,000 &= \text{Consequence B} \times 1,000,000\end{aligned}$$

So you see, the more people you put into one group, the accumulation of their sinfulness creates a certain mass of badness that's hard to overcome. By myself on a desert island, I might be out of step with God, but it's easy enough to hear from Him and change my ways. When I'm attached to a group with a million, I might be doing great personally, but I'm still subject to the danger that others are reaping bad consequences for which we'll ALL be punished.

The prophets in the Old Testament warned the whole nation of the coming judgements upon them. Even the righteous remnant had to go into captivity and slavery and death. Have you ever thought about the children of Israel wandering in the desert because of their lack of faith? No, I don't mean the "Children of Israel" as a nation, I mean the children themselves. ALL the grownups died before their eyes. The kids weren't at fault, but they still had to suffer the loss of every single old person - parents, grandmas, grandpas, aunts, uncles - before they could go into the promised land. See? They were subject to the consequence brought up on them by the mass of sinfulness of their group, even if they themselves were behaving as they should.

Sure, there are times when God saves the few good ones (Noah, Lot, Rahab, etc.), but most of the time everybody has to suffer together. That's why it's so important to be accountable and watch out for each other. That's why the folks doing right can't just quietly sit by and think they're going to be free of judgement.

OK, now here's where it starts to get more complicated. I think it's reasonable to assume that:

IF the Bible is in the inspired Word of God, THEN nothing is in there by accident.

IF nothing is in there by accident, THEN it must have some future application.

IF something irritated God at one point in history, THEN it probably irritates Him all the time.

IF God knows everything, THEN He must be able to plan ahead and see future applications of the same warning.

IF the nation of Israel did something that brought judgement on them, THEN other children of God doing the same thing should also expect judgement.

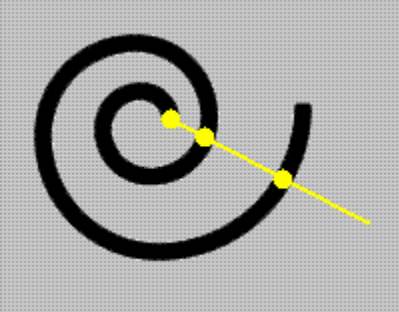
IF there was prophecy about Israel related to their misbehavior, THEN we should assume that that same prophecy relates to other folks doing the same thing.

We know God is great at conservation of resources and reuse of assets. Look at the ecosystem, everything has a purpose and is recycled from the elephant to the maggot to the dirt to a tree to a leaf to an elephant.

So, it seems to me that when God says something in the Bible it's likely that it could be recycled and used again and again. The Lord's Prayer is good for kids in Sunday School, but it's also good for somebody worried about getting bread on their table. It's good for a Christian martyr on his way to a firing squad and it's good for someone praying in the biggest possible terms for the Bride, the universal church (Our Father, Our Bread, Our Sins, etc.).

History doesn't really repeat itself in equal measure since we're always growing. So rather than it being circular, it's spiral. And something that had application at a particular point will probably have application again when the spiral pulls back around. So when an Old Testament prophet spoke judgement on the 10,000 people in a town or tribe that had taken on idolatry and then we see God's consequences on them for it - we should be able to predict that if 100,000 do the same exact thing it will be 10 times as bad. And if 100,000,000 do it, it will be 10,000 times as bad. Eventually, if enough of the earth is bad, the only choice is a flood (Noah) or a massive reboot (Revelation, fire, black sun, red moon, earthquake, 2/3 of population dead, other badness, etc.)

Helpful Visual Aid



$$\begin{aligned} \text{Idolatry} \times 1 &= \text{Judgement} \times 1 \\ \text{Idolatry} \times 10,000 &= \text{Judgement} \times 10,000 \\ \text{Idolatry} \times 100,000,000 &= \text{Judgement} \times 100,000,000 \end{aligned}$$

You see, Hosea CAN be about us. Revelation can be about AD 70 and it can STILL be about the Last Days. Much of it was fulfilled, but some of the big, bad scary stuff can't happen until the final rotation. At some point the spiral hits a dead end because the consequences are too great for the Earth to contain them.

We're doing every bad thing in Hosea only MANY, MANY times worse. Go read it. See that the judgement could apply to us today. Then cry like a baby and repent of your part in it. Commit to trying to do something to push back the darkness.