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Scary Gary and Y2K

by Thomas Ice

What you believe about Bible prophecy greatly impacts how you live in the present. Even though this is true, it does not appear to be widely believed or understood by the majority of American Christians. Bible prophecy beliefs today are too often thought to be peripheral matters of personal preference. Yet, 60% of the New Testament cannot be expounded without making interpretative decisions about matters relating either directly or indirectly to Bible prophecy. A current case-in-point is Reconstructionists¹ Gary North and his predictions about the impending Y2K computer problem.

SCARY GARY'S STRANGE VIEWS

Gary North is a postmillennial preterist, who believes that by January 1, 2000 the collapse of Modern Civilization will be well under way because of the Y2K computer problem. Secular critics of Dr. North have nicknamed him "Scary Gary," because of his overreaction to Y2K. Dr. North has said about Y2K:

The Y2K crisis is systemic. It cannot possibly be fixed. I think it will wipe out every national government in the West. Not just modify them—destroy them. I honestly think the Federal government will go under. I think the U.S.A. will break up the way the U.S.S.R. did. Call me a dreamer. Call me an optimist. That's what I think. This will decentralize the social order. That is what I have wanted all my adult life. In my view, Y2K is our deliverance. Just don't be in a city when deliverance occurs.²

It has been said of Dr. North that he has predicted 17 of the last 2 recessions. Why has he made such radical predictions over the last 25 years? As Dr. North would say of himself, it is because of his core beliefs that lead him to expect such disaster. What are those core beliefs? As noted above, Dr. North is a preterist postmillennialist³ when it comes to Bible prophecy.

Preterism

Preterists believe that most Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled in the past. They usually teach that our Lord's teachings about prophecy, prophecy in the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation were fulfilled in events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. This enables him to say that we are past the Tribulation and in both the millennium and some form of the new heavens and new earth. Thus, he is not looking for our Lord's any-moment return.

Postmillennialism

Dr. North's postmillennialism teaches that before Christ returns a majority of the world will be converted to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Such a reign of our Lord from heaven, through His church will lead to a social, political, and economic paradise upon earth before Christ returns. Even though Dr. North believes we are living

in the kingdom now, he divides it into two phases: 1) the present phase where the church is advancing through evangelism and social involvement leading to the defeat of Christ's enemies. 2) The millennial phase where the church has conquered her enemies and thus enjoys a long reign of victory before Christ returns to earth to end history.

Cycles of Judgment

Dr. North has taught that God periodically judges civilization as a means to advancing His kingdom toward the millennial phase. A model of this Divine operation, according to Dr. North, would be the fall of the Roman Empire during the Early Mediaeval era. He teaches that because of this crisis, the decentralization of society occurred, being replaced by the rise of feudalism. Feudal society provides a model for decentralization of governing authority, as opposed to the centralization of earlier Rome. These periodic judgments, Dr. North contends, are the application and outworking of the curses of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. Never mind that these are specifically stated in their contexts to be for Israel. Somehow he applies them to modern Gentile nations. Thus, modern society, according to Dr. North, is on the verge of a similar cycle of God's judgment. Thus, out of the rubble of the impending collapse of modern civilization, Dr. North believes that the remnant of Christians will provide leadership that the world will follow.

A.D. 2000

Postmillennialists are divided into two camps when it comes to how the progress of the millennium will be realized. Most are probably *gradualists*, who believe that the kingdom advances slowly, over thousands of years. Dr. North is one who believes the kingdom advances through cataclysmic events such as revivals and judgments. Thus, Dr. North thinks the kingdom will reach the millennial state in a matter of years, by the year 2000 or 2010 at the latest. Dr. North believes in the "Septa-Millennial Theory,"⁴ which teaches that the year 2000 will be the sixth thousandth year of history, thus time for the 1000 year reign of Christ's millennium. Dr. North spells out why he expects Christians to be in control of planet earth by the year 2000, 2010 at the latest in a 1985 article entitled "The Sabbath Millennium."⁵ It is not too surprising to see why, with the above set of prophetic beliefs, that Dr. North has jumped upon the Y2K bandwagon.

SCARY GARY'S TRACK RECORD

For about the last 25 years Gary North has been predicting the collapse of Western Civilization that would be brought on by various contemporary events at the time of Dr. North's predictions. Some of the predictions that I can recall Dr. North making include the following:

- Nixon's wage and price controls
- The inflation of the late 1970s under the Carter Administration
- Reaganomics in the early 1980s
- Nuclear war during the 1980s
- The AIDS epidemic which would kill tens of millions by the year 2000

- Now, he predicts that Y2K will result in 1.5 billion death worldwide, starting any day now.

When the above is combined with Dr. North's rhetoric about his functioning as a biblical prophet and those who refuse to listen to what he is saying will experience God's judgment if they refuse to prepare for the Y2K disaster, it is a message that leaves no room for alternate views.⁶ Dr. North usually equates his pronouncements with God's will. In other words, not following Dr. North's advice is the same as disobeying God's Word. Yet, unlike God's Word which has a 100% fulfillment of its predictions, Gary North is batting around .000. His Y2K predictions, I predict, will be no different than his previous swings and misses.

GLASS HOUSES

There is a saying that those living in glass houses should not throw stones. It is probably fair to say that there has not been a greater critic of those who teach the literal and future fulfillment of Bible prophecy, the view of Dr. LaHaye and myself, than Gary North. Specifically he has on many occasions said that our views of prophecy are so pessimistic that he labels us "pessimillennialists." Yet Dr. North claims to be an optimillennialist because he is postmillennial. However, no one spews out more doom and gloom per square foot than Dr. North. Because of his extreme Y2K predictions he has received the nickname of "Scary Gary" from his secular critics. Don't they know that Dr. North is an optimist? Apparently they go by what they read and not on the basis of one's theoretical beliefs. Shouldn't an optimist actually exhibit optimism?

In fact, our premillennialism is extremely optimist in that we believe that one day Jesus Christ will return to planet earth and will rule personally for a thousand years from Jerusalem. This will be the apex of history. We hope this will happen very soon.

IMPLICATIONS

Many within the evangelical community have bought into Gary North's spin about Y2K, without having a clue as to where he is coming from. It is clear that Dr. North's extreme position on this issue is not based upon responsible information, instead it is derived from his belief that something big had to happen in or around A.D. 2000 for the vindication of his personal views of prophecy. It won't happen. The Y2K problem is being fixed. Western Civilization will continue down the same road next year that it is on today. No doubt we are all deserving of God's judgment, but that will not happen until after the rapture of the church, during the Tribulation. Yet, many Christians have bought into the Gary North spin on Y2K.

Gary North was the first conservative Christian out there pushing his interpretation about Y2K. As a result, early on, many evangelicals were influenced by his misinformation and speculation, not realizing the role being played by Dr. North's preterist postmillennialism. Thus, many have adopted much of Dr. North's thought, including his postmillennial implications, in their zeal to try to tie Y2K into Bible prophecy. Frankly, I am more concerned about J2C (Jesus' Second Coming) than Y2K. The rapture, that Gary North does not believe in, will cause much more panic than could ever be imagined, even by Dr. North.

A couple of books that I would recommend about Y2K are, Dave Hunt's *Y2K: A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria* (Harvest House), and Arno and Joel Froese's *When Y2K Dies* (Olive Press). These two books provide solid and recent information that convinced me that the millennium bug is being fixed and will not bite (or should I say byte) too hard, if at all. If you have not read these books, why don't you read one or both and get something in addition to much of the Y2K hype that is out there, even from those within our own prophetic viewpoint.

CONCLUSION

I have gone on record, well before the arrival of any Y2K implications, pointing out that Dr. Gary North and his unwarranted position on Y2K is nothing new for him. He has had a long track record of predicting disaster, with the result that usually the opposite occurs. Why does he incessantly keep saying that disaster is just on the horizon? He is motivated by his false views of Bible prophecy. Those of us who believe in the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy and look for a future time of fulfillment should learn to examine what others believe about these things and where they lead. The case of Dr. Gary North should prove to be instructive in this matter. What Christians believe about the future and its implications can be extremely important.

Peter tells us, "Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation" (2 Peter 3:24-15a). If "these things" have already taken place in the past, then the admonition to "be found by Him in peace, . . ." would not make sense in the present. But because we do look for these things in the future we are to assume the posture of diligent service to our Lord, till he arrives. What you believe about the future impacts you in the present. I don't know about you, but we are looking for the any-moment return of our Lord. Come quickly Lord Jesus! Maranatha!

¹ For an in-depth presentation and analysis of Gary North and the Christian Reconstruction movement see H. Wayne House and Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse?* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1988).

² Quoted by Rob Boston, "Apocalypse Now?" *Church & State* (March 1999), p. 8.

³ For a definition and extended explanation of many of the terms relating to Bible prophecy that I use in this article see Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1997).

⁴ For an explanation of this view see Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *The Truth About 2000 a.d. & Predicting Christ's Return* (Eugene: Harvest House, 1996).

⁵ Gary North, "The Sabbath Millennium" *Biblical Economics Today* (Vol. VIII, No. 2; Feb./Mar., 1985).

⁶ For an example see Gary North, "Prophets, Leasers, Followers, Losers" *Biblical Economics Today* (Vol. XV, No. 3; Apr./May, 1993).