“Surely I am coming quickly”

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“Amen. Even so come, Sovereign Jesus!” (Rev. 22:20). “With the Lord a thousand years is as one day” (2 Peter 3:8), so from His point of view, it has only been two days. Recently a grandson wrote to me that he had decided to delve into eschatology and asked if he could send me questions. The resulting dialog served as the basis for this study.

Most church members probably do not concern themselves with the subject; they are ‘pan’—it will all pan out in the end. And of course it all will, just as God has declared. Those who have concerned themselves with the subject have usually picked a ‘package’, one of the several lines of interpretation that exist among Christians. Arguments based on packages tend to generate more heat than light. As the old saying went, ‘a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still’. As a sometime theologian, ThM, I speak from personal observation.

But I am also a linguist, PhD, and I insist that the norms of language must be respected. Further, with reference to an inspired Text, that text must be interpreted on its own terms (not those of a ‘package’). Attention please. Interpreting the Sacred Text is not a game of tiddlywinks, it is a matter of life or death, eternal life or death. The truth is not democratic, is not determined by opinion or vote; the truth **IS**, and it has an Owner (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 17:17). The truth about any subject is absolute, but our understanding is faulty; because we are small, limited, ignorant—we simply do not have all the facts (but God does, so when He speaks, smart people listen).

Now consider Mark 8:38—"Yes, whoever is ashamed of me **and my words** in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of the Man will also be ashamed of him whenever He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy Angels.” We are not allowed to be ashamed of the <u>words</u> that Jesus spoke; it is mandatory to agree with what He taught. Surely, because we will be judged by those words. “The one who rejects me and does not receive my <u>sayings</u> has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken, that is what will judge him on the last day; because I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me, <u>He</u> gave me a command, what I should say and what I should speak” (John 12:48-49). (To reject His sayings is to reject Him; and how can you “have the mind of Christ”, 1 Cor. 2:16, if you don’t think like He does?) So on what basis will those words judge you? They will judge you based on what you did with them, as defined by the normal rules of language (since God’s words are true and faithful). But how <u>can</u> they judge you? They can judge you because they are living (Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 1:23, Acts 7:38). Any word delivered by the Sovereign Creator will be authoritative, and He does not deliver words without purpose. To discern the purpose, it is often necessary to ask the Holy Spirit for illumination.

The crucial question at issue is the interpretation of Revelation, although other texts also come into play. For one line of interpretation, the date that Revelation was 'published' is crucial, since for them it had to be before 70 AD. However, the date that the book of Revelation was published is beside the point, as I will now explain, based on the necessity of interpreting the Text on its own terms. In Revelation 21:5, the One sitting on the throne, the glorified Christ, said: "Write, for these words are true and faithful". Now then, a true word cannot be false, obviously. And a faithful word cannot be duplicitous, deceiving, designed to fake us out. A faithful word must be taken at face value, within the norms of the language involved. A faithful word exists to give us honest information.

Revelation 1:1 states that the whole book of Revelation was given by the glorified Jesus Christ to John, that the whole book is "the testimony of Jesus Christ" (v. 2). It is the same glorified Jesus who is sitting on the throne in 21:9 and declared: "these words are true and faithful"—He guarantees the veracity and faithfulness of everything in the book of Revelation. It follows that to interpret those words in any way that is not "true and faithful" is to call the glorified Jesus a liar, to which He will not take kindly, since in John 14:6 He Himself said: "I am the Truth".

Figures of speech are a normal part of any language, but they are governed by rules. In contrast to them, grammatical categories cannot be 'spiritualized' or given figurative meanings. Their function is literal. A Subject is a Subject, a Verb is a Verb, a Preposition is a Preposition, an Article is an Article. And a definite article defines; that is its function. To illustrate, consider Revelation 20:7; "when the thousand years are finished" is defined by the definite article "the"; according to the rules of grammar it has to be a literal thousand years. Anyone who denies that there will be a literal thousand-year Messianic Kingdom is interpreting the Greek language dishonestly. It follows that Revelation 20:7 does away with amillennialism, postmillennialism and preterism; surely, because at no time during the past 6,000 years has Satan been bound, and certainly not for a thousand years, as the glorified Christ declared he must be. The Sovereign declared that there will be a literal thousand-year Messianic Reign, if the words in Rev. 20:2-7 are "true and faithful", which declaration owes nothing to so-called 'dispensational theology'.

In Matthew 24:21-22 Sovereign Jesus declared that there will be an unprecedented world-wide tribulation "never been . . . and never again", immediately followed by His return to earth (vv. 29-30). So there will certainly be a 'Great Tribulation', and Sovereign Jesus will certainly return to earth. Neither of those events has happened so far.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 Paul describes the Rapture of the Church, "by a word of the Lord". So there will certainly be that Rapture, that has not happened so far. There is a legitimate question about the moment that the Rapture will occur, since there

are several texts that permit different interpretations (except that it must occur before the Millenium).

'Apocalyptic literature', with the meaning given to it by Satan's instruments, does not exist. Our word 'apocalypse' is a transliteration of the Greek word that means 'revelation' or 'disclosure'. The corresponding verb means to reveal or disclose. When a lawyer reads a will, it is an apocalypse; he is making information public that had not been available. There is nothing mysterious or symbolic about it. That phrase is just a gambit by Satan's instruments to undermine the authority of Scripture. To use such a gambit to avoid the plain meaning of the Text is dishonest. (Forget not Rev. 21:8.)

Now about the claim that Revelation is figurative language. In Rev. 12:3 the huge red dragon is plainly stated to be a sign, a metaphor, but there is no question as to what it represents. Rev. 20:2 says: "the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is a slanderer, even Satan". The dragon is Satan. In Rev. 7:8, "the tribe of Zebulon" can only have the literal, biblical meaning; and numbers like 'twelve thousand' do not have a symbolic meaning, they are literal (although large numbers can be 'rounded'). Everything that John wrote, he **saw**. And he saw it because the Sovereign showed it to him. He only described things that he saw and as he saw them. He found some things to be difficult to describe, but he did his best. Since everything that the Sovereign showed him is true and faithful, it must be handled as honest information.

Could it be that most people are just ‘parrots’, repeating what they were taught? How many seminary professors and pastors have gone to the Sacred Text for themselves, allowing it to say what it says, treating it as being “true and faithful”? To be sincerely wrong does not deliver you from the consequences of being wrong. When I lived in the Amazon jungle with a tribal people, they sincerely did not believe in the existence of germs and bacteria, because they couldn’t see them; but they got sick and died anyway. Their sincere belief did not deliver them from the consequences of being wrong. Of course, the seriousness of the consequences depends on the nature and importance of the mistake.

‘Ignorance of the law is no excuse.’ If you break the law ignorantly, you have still broken the law and will have to pay. In John 8:44 Sovereign Jesus declared that Satan is “the father of lying”. In Hebrew idiom the ‘son’ of something is characterized by that something. The ‘father’ of something owns that something, because he produced it. So Satan owns all falsehood, and the Holy Spirit owns all truth. It follows that to repeat a falsehood serves Satan, even if the person thinks that it is true. Fact is fact; how you feel about it does not make it a non-fact!

A ‘parrot’, ignorantly repeating what it was taught, is one thing, but Revelation 21:27 and 22:15 refer to something else. 22:15 refers to “everyone who loves and practices a lie”: that is not a ‘parrot’, it is someone who has embraced the lie and made it a part of his philosophy of life. In John 16:13 Sovereign Jesus said that the Holy Spirit

“will guide you into all the truth”; it follows that someone who embraces a lie does not have the Holy Spirit, or at least is not listening to Him. Such a person condemns himself, being excluded from the tree of life, but 21:27 refers to something worse. To condemn yourself is your choice, but to bring about the condemnation of other people is malignant.

Revelation 21:27 refers to “provoking a lie”; such a person is promoting the lie, is ‘selling’ it as truth. Actually the Greek verb here has a wide area of meaning, the basic ones being ‘to do, make or cause’, and all three apply here. To ‘do’ a lie is to tell or live it. To ‘make’ a lie is to create it. To ‘cause’ a lie is to put it in other people’s heads so that they repeat it as truth. All three are excluded from the City. I rendered ‘cause’ as ‘provoke’, to promote a lie and ‘sell’ it as truth. People who do that are damaging their students and hearers—the extent of the damage depends on the nature of the falsehood. It should be obvious that such people did not consult the Holy Spirit before teaching what they teach. If they are not knowingly serving Satan, they almost certainly have one or more strongholds of Satan in their minds; a stronghold of Satan on a given subject locks you into the falsehood on that subject; you are not allowed to analyze evidence objectively. Again, some falsehoods are more serious than others. The Righteous Judge knows all the relevant factors about each of us and will judge us fairly, albeit He abominates falsehood.

And that brings us to 2 Thess. 2:9-12, that describes an even more serious reality.

> 9 that one’s coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception among those who are wasting themselves, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved. 11 Yes, because of this God will send them an active delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all may be condemned who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in wickedness.

Help! This is exceedingly serious, literally a matter of eternal life or death. We need to analyze this with care. The use of the verb ‘receive’ in verse 10 clearly implies an act of volition on their part; the love of the truth was offered or made available to them, but they did not want it; they wanted to be able to lie and to entertain lies told by others. But the consequences of such a choice are terrible; they turned their back on salvation. Since there are only two spiritual kingdoms in this world, that of Sovereign Jesus and that of Satan, “those who are wasting themselves”, in this text, are still in Satan’s kingdom and therefore wide open to his “wicked deception”. The Text states plainly that they are wasting themselves “because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved”. They are not saved.

God Himself sends “an active delusion” upon those who do not “receive the love of the truth”, so that they “may be condemned”. Notice the sequence: first they reject the love of the truth; it is as a consequence of that choice that God sends the

delusion. Dear reader, please stop and think. If God Himself sends an active delusion into your mind, you are dead; there is no power that can save you. The implication is that there is a point of no return; God sends the delusion so that they may be condemned. The only intelligent choice is to embrace the truth, as defined by the Sacred Text, interpreted on its own terms.