

Episode #427 Bins for Bible Prophecies 1 – Sorting Prophetic Material

I. The Word of God contains many truths. Some are historical, telling us things that took place in the past. Some are current, telling of God’s work today and what His will is for those of us living and believing now. Others have to do with future events and what will take place in God’s plans for the future. We often call the predictive passages of the Bible “prophecy.”

II. There is a need to properly order the predictive passages of Scripture. Lord Bacon called this “sorting prophetic material.”

A. The Bible also supports the need for this. II Timothy 2:15.

1. “Study” means to work diligently at it, like an apprentice seeking to learn from a master must study him diligently to also become a master.
2. “Rightly dividing” means literally to “cut it straight,” and was a word Paul was very familiar with from tent making.
3. Dispensationalism typically concerns itself with sorting the present from the past. But in this case, we seek to properly sort the prophecies of the future.

B. Sorting prophetic material might be compared to sorting screws.

1. A mess of screws would need to be sorted into various containers. One could sort by length; standard head versus Philip’s head versus hex head; width, etc. Each new screw type would require a new bin to be properly sorted.
2. The same is true of predictive prophecies of Scripture. These can be sorted into the various future time periods when they will take place.
3. We must establish these bins, then seek to sort predictive prophecies into them. Every time we come on a prophecy that does not fit into an existing bin, we must create a new bin to hold it. Once we have all our bins, then we must decide regarding each prophecy what bin it must fit into.

C. Let us do this with the prophecies of Scripture. For the sake of this study, we will start at the end, the final bin, and work our way backwards toward the present.

III. The Final Bin: Revelation 21:1-4.

- A. There are very definite predictions here. These define our first period.
- B. This period starts with the establishing of a new heavens and a new earth, for the former have passed away. There is no more sea.
- C. John sees a glorious vision of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. God’s tabernacle will be with men.
- D. This is the last bin mentioned in the Bible. We find its beginning here, but it has no end that we know of.
- E. This is our first bin: “The New Heavens and the New Earth.”

IV. The Second Bin: Revelation 20:1-6.

- A. There are predictions here as well. This also sets forth a time period, during which Satan is chained and imprisoned in the Abyss. We read also of a resurrection, and those who live in it reign with Christ for a thousand years.
- B. This bin lasts a thousand years. This is commonly called the Millennium, though that is not its name in Scripture. It is a good name to start out with, though, since “Millennium” means a thousand years.
- C. Amillennialists try to say that these years are symbolic for the time period between Christ’s first and second comings.

1. Many time periods in the Bible are symbolic, like the Israelites' forty years' wandering in the wilderness. Yet that does not mean they are not also a literal forty years. If they were not, there would be no symbol!
2. If we try to imagine these things as being true, we can hardly do so. If we are reigning with Christ right now, how is that the case? Plus if Satan is chained and not deceiving the nations, then why are they so deceived? This is clearly wrong, and is not an honest way to sort Scripture.

D. This is our second bin: "The Thousand Years."

V. The Third Bin: Revelation 20:7-9.

- A. This prophecy does not fit into "The New Heavens and the New Earth," since in that period there is no more death.
- B. This prophecy does not fit into "The Thousand Years" since it takes place after the thousand years "have expired." Therefore, we must sort this prophecy into a new bin, one that fits in between our other two bins.
- C. We can get the name for this new bin from verse 3. "A little season" in the *King James Version*, from which the most common name for this period comes.
- D. This is our third bin: "The Little Season."

VI. The Fourth Bin: Revelation 1-19.

- A. We have covered the last three chapters of Revelation. The first 19, however, must also have their own time period "bin" to fit in.
- B. Careful comparison with Daniel 9 (especially vs. 24-27) will lead to the conviction that these chapters take place during the last week of Daniel's seventy weeks.
 1. We typically think of only weeks of days. However, the Bible speaks of weeks of years. Exodus 23:10-11 and Leviticus 25:1-22. These weeks of years were defined by a Sabbath year at the end of them.
 2. Seventy weeks of years would be seven times seventy years, or 490 years. If the Jubilee years are an interruption every 50 years, then Daniel 9 actually predicts a five hundred year period.
 3. The last 3.5 years of this period are what Matthew 24:21 calls the "great tribulation." From this we get our name for this fourth bin. It takes place immediately before Christ's second coming, and before the thousand years reign that follows His return.
 4. Note that I am not a postmillennialist. They believe the efforts of the Christian church to bring the world to Christ will result in the thousand years. I believe it is Christ's return that brings in the thousand years. That return takes place between the tribulation period and "The Thousand Years."
 5. This is our fourth bin: "The Tribulation Period."

VII. From all this, we can construct the following chart:

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--|
| The Tribulation Period | The Millennium | The Little Season | The New Heavens and New Earth |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- A. This takes us from the start of "The Tribulation Period" to "The New Heavens and New Earth."

- B. The Bible does not take us beyond “The New Heavens and New Earth.” It could be this will have no end. Of course, there could be changes within it as God’s further plans unfold. Yet whatever takes place from this point, we have no information.
- C. Before we go further with sorting we must examine the second bin, “The Thousand Years,” a bit more closely.

VIII. Conclusion: To truly understand the predictive prophecies of Scripture and God’s future plans, we must properly sort them into time periods. Lord Bacon called this “Sorting Prophetic Material.” We compare this to sorting screws into bins. This must be done properly for right understanding. We have established four time period “bins” into which to sort prophecies: “The Tribulation Period,” “The Thousand Years,” “The Little Season,” and “The New Heavens and New Earth.” We will examine the Bible’s future prophecies further in upcoming programs.