

How You Can Avoid a Fortune-Cookie Mentality About the Future

My wife and I recently stopped at a Chinese take-out to pick up lunch. In addition to the delicious smelling and tasting food was the ubiquitous fortune cookie.

Usually, their words of wisdom are merely innocuous ideals, often with rhyming words. But they do provide a momentary satisfaction to mankind's quest to know the future.

But there is really only one reliable source for knowing and understanding what to do about the future and that little fast-food diner is not it.

People actually approach the future emotionally before they know or understand the facts. Consequently, they are often involuntarily moving toward the future with either fear or faith.

The New Testament says that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The best way to develop faith about the unseen future is to acknowledge the universal sovereignty of God. He is in charge and rules (and overrules) the affairs of men and women.

This Sovereign of heaven often selectively reveals His plans for the future to trustworthy spokespersons (like Daniel, in the Old Testament) before they happen. Then, these prophetic seers share these words of insight, knowledge or faith for the future with others. The recipient can either accept or reject them and adjust their lives and actions accordingly.

God Guides the Future

The Old Testament Prophet Daniel lived five centuries before

Jesus and served and advised four prominent kings and three kingdoms in a special role for over 70 years. Specifically, he served in the governments of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian.

First, he saw Nebuchadnezzar rise up in power and fall in disgrace, ending up eating grass like an ox before he humbly praised the Highest God and honored the King of heaven (Dan. 3:26-4:27). Apparently, the next king, Belshazzar (Dan. 5), was not as proud as Nebuchadnezzar, but he was more presumptuous and paid for it with his life.

After a bizarre event at a royal banquet, King Belshazzar called for Daniel to interpret some supernatural handwriting on a wall—the banquet guests actually saw a hand writing cryptic words “on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace” (Dan. 5:5b). The king acknowledged to Daniel that he had heard that “the Spirit of God is in you” and “light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you” (Dan. 5:14). After Daniel interpreted the cryptic words and their meaning, he was promoted to a high position.

Scripture relates that when King Darius (of the Medes and Persian dynasty) came into power, he preferred the prophet Daniel to be prime minister and lead as a kind of “chief among equals” with the other two presidents, with 120 princes serving under them to govern in regional areas. Daniel was preferred in these roles “because he had an excellent spirit within him” (Dan. 6:3).

Finally, Daniel saw Cyrus the Persian, whose name had been prophesied one hundred years before his rule (see Isaiah 44:28-45:1), become an instrument in God’s hands for rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and laying the foundation for the rebuilding of the Jewish temple there.

0 King, Live Forever

Three times in the writings of Daniel we read the diplomatic

words of entre, “O King, live forever” (Dan. 2:4, 6:6, 6:9). No mere human has the power to live forever or to design and guarantee their own futures. But the words appealed to the kings’ pride and vanity and got their attention for the courtier to have an audience with the king!

The COVID-19 pandemic proved that mankind is in a mess, everywhere and at the same time. We can’t control our own present, let alone our futures. As the predicted events of the “birth pangs” of even greater problems, which Jesus predicted (Matt. 24), are unfolding, we must acknowledge that there is a God in heaven, and He rules in the kingdoms and futures of men.

“In the days of these kings the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to another people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44).

The calamities around us only continue as the God of heaven allows. One day soon, King Jesus is coming back to do away with the kingdoms of this world and to set up His kingdom of righteousness, where He will rule forever!

“Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin but to save those who eagerly wait for Him” (Heb. 9:28).

How are you approaching your future? I urge you to choose faith over fear, “cast your care on Him” and “eagerly wait” for His soon return. {eo}

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