

Forecasting the Future

September 1995

“A Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor is a strategic impossibility.” (George F. Eliot, 1938)

“[Television] won’t be able to hold onto any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night.” (Darryl F. Zanuck, 1946)

“Landing [on] and moving around the moon offers so many serious problems for human beings that it may take science another 200 years to lick them.” (Science Digest, 1948)

Humans constantly prove themselves to be inept when it comes to forecasting the future. The very day before Alabama was hit with NCAA sanctions, I observed that the penalty would not be serious because such news would have leaked to the press. Oops.

The future is hazy because we are often influenced by our own self-interests. For example, Darryl F. Zanuck was head of 20th Century-Fox when he predicted television’s demise. He did not want a rival entertainment medium to succeed.

Further, it is hard to anticipate circumstances which will trigger the power of human ingenuity and creativity. Who could foresee in 1948 the Soviet advances in space technology or the assassination of President Kennedy which inspired our nation to meet JFK’s challenge of landing on the moon before 1970?

The future can also be obscured by overconfidence. “Surely the Japanese could not (read “*would not*”) attack *our* country!” But they could, and they did.

Accurate prediction of the future can give the Christian confidence that God has spoken. When Isaiah mentions Cyrus *by name* and tells of his role in the Jewish restoration yet *200 years in the future*, it is a powerful evidence of divine inspiration (Isa 44:28; 45:1-6).

On the other hand, when a prediction is made and time proves it false, man has spoken rather than God (see Dt 18:20-22). God’s accurate knowledge of the future arises out of his *control* of human events. He *knows* the future because His will makes it come to pass. The alert Christian is thus untroubled by empty predictions of religious windbags.

In spite of my previous failure, I will hazard another prediction: I *confidently* predict that as the turn of the millennium nears, numerous and wild will be the prophecies of Jesus’ return. Then again, the Lord may not let the world remain that long. That I *will not* predict since Jesus said it was unknowable. Save this bulletin; you may need it to prove me wrong.