

Was the internet

WWW.

predicted 2500 years ago?

By Richard Fowler

Did you miss the anniversary? No, not your husband's or wife's...panic over! Actually, one that has shaped your life, quite possibly, more than your better half.

Why? Because if it wasn't for the anniversary of three particular letters in the alphabet you may not have met that special one...or have your job...or, for that matter, have access to the incredible library of information that is 'on tap' every day to feed your mind on everything from the American Presidential election to the latest celebrity break-up...(and there was me thinking the Brangelina combo would last!)

And what are these three letters, you may ask? Well, of course: WWW!

Now, we all love a good old acronym, and unless you have been in cryogenic sleep for the last 25 years, you too would have heard of the World Wide Web—its 25th anniversary celebrated in August 2016.¹

But was this global colossus of an information-sharing platform predicted 2500 years ago?

Now, I like people who predict things. The only problem is: they're usually wrong! So, if I read something in an

ancient text that would appear to predict the coming of an information age (yes, before it even happened) then I may have to put aside my cyber cynicism for one moment. After all, you can't believe everything you read on the Web!

And that's why this prediction is so different; it wasn't written on the Web. Nope! So, where? Well, actually, in an ancient Aramaic-Hebrew text by a Babylonian statesman.

Ok, wait a minute. Are we meant to believe that someone living in the economic and educational powerhouse that was the Babylonian Empire around 600 BC wrote about something that has come to re-define Maslow's hierarchy of needs, (Wi-Fi is now on the bottom of the pyramid of needs), namely, the World Wide Web?

Well, the awkward answer may well be yes, to some degree!

But before we get carried away, let's remind ourselves what the Web actually is for a moment. If we compare the internet to roads—the pathways in which information runs down, then the World Wide Web is the buildings on the sides of the roads. These are the 'locations' you go to look at things on the internet and pick up information: anytime

you want to surf down the internet road, the WWW provides you with a location for you to go and 'pick up' any information you want, or look at a website. And let's not forget how this has comprehensively changed our lives. From live tweets coming from Mars sent from Curiosity, to live streaming of drone attacks in Syria. The access we have to knowledge and information is something no one could have dreamt of 100 years ago, let alone 2500 years ago.

But in 1989 British computer scientist Sir Tim Berners-Lee gave birth to the Web idea so that it would be easier for his scientific buddies to share information. And now, get this: every two days we create as much information as we did from the dawn of civilization up until 2003.² It means that every minute Facebook users like 4,166,667 posts and in the same 60 seconds YouTube users upload 300 hours of new video.

Talk about a running to and fro of information. Cue our ancient prediction: '...seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase' (Daniel 12:4). I don't know about you, but that is a pretty good description of what has happened because of the World Wide Web.

Now, you might be thinking: 'Yeah, but anyone could have said that'. True. But the point is: why would they have? Our highly educated statesman, Daniel, was living in the cultural, social, and educational epicentre of the ancient world. The Babylonians were at the top of the academic pile, so to speak. Knowledge was as available as it could be. But rather, Daniel predicted that in the latter days, knowledge would increase. And it has—exponentially! His predication could have found no greater fulfilment than that of the internet and the World Wide Web.

Yet, as we stand as masters over the ocean of free flowing information, it has failed to bring us answers to our most basic of global problems, especially in the pursuit of peace. Do you know how many countries are *not* involved in a conflict or war right

now? Just 10! And those countries are: Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Japan, Mauritius, Panama, Qatar, Switzerland, Uruguay, and Vietnam.³

Twenty-five years of the World Wide Web has taught us that more information does not equal more solutions. It appears that Einstein was right when he said: 'The more I learn, the more I realise how much I don't know'.⁴ What is needed is not more information, but rather, essential knowledge.

And there is a difference. Information tells us the what and how; it helps us understand the material world: culture, politics, economics, religion and $2 + 2 = 4$. However, essential knowledge tells us the why; it helps us understand our place in this world and why we are here. But more than that, if properly applied it helps us to understand each other and how to get along. Essential knowledge

reveals essential principles that produce peace in our relationships, whether at home, at work, or between nations. If only America, Russia, and Syria would find it!

Well, if there was a heart in them to look, they would find this source of essential knowledge in the catalogue of books our ancient prediction comes from: the Bible. This prediction, millennia ago, makes it a book for our time; a book for you! Why don't you open it up and find out what else it has to say about the future... your future?

Notes

- ¹ <https://goo.gl/ZH4D41>
- ² <https://goo.gl/hdx18i>
- ³ <https://goo.gl/2Tqm9b>
- ⁴ <https://goo.gl/b15G2b>

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