

Predictions of the Rapture and the End of the World

False Prophecy and the Christianized Astrology

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Since the birth of the church, people have been predicting the day of Christ's return to earth. He Himself predicted His own return in Matthew's and Mark's Gospels, but He also made it clear that no one would or could know the day or hour of that apocalyptic event. *

The question now is *why* some people find it necessary to make such predictions and why such error is embraced by so many. The most obvious answer is that people love predictability when it comes to apocalyptic subjects, and they love to be *scared*. Jesus told His followers ten times to *be ready* for the day of His return, which, for some people seems to have been interpreted as a calling from God to predict it. Jesus' command to be ready, however, wasn't a mandate to predict an event that, by His own words, He Himself doesn't know.

End-of-the-world predictions are sensational, and sensationalists and misguided individuals capitalize on such predictions, exploiting a vast audience of ignorant or gullible people who will eagerly embrace them. This, in turn, makes them famous, sells lots of books and massages their pride. Eventually, when the Lord doesn't return as predicted, they often reset the date, invent a scenario that protects their integrity ("He *did* return, but it was a spiritual event invisible to humans,' etc.) or they move on from the error as if they made no such prediction—usually without apology. The Bible calls such people "false prophets" and warns everyone not to listen to them.

The advent of social media sites like Facebook and YouTube along with publishing houses willing to invest in such profitable Biblical speculation have provided false prophets with a huge audience of conspiracy devotees and the spiritually naïve. Recent best-selling Christian books, blogs and wide-reaching YouTube videos have broadcasted predictions of the rapture, the imminent return of Christ and His second coming, all as seen through the lens of modern westernized readings of Bible prophecy (mathematical equations, Bible codes,

* Matthew 24:26, Mark 13:32

modern idioms, etc.). Of even greater concern, however, are the very popular attempts to reveal Biblical prophecy using forms of Christianized *astrology*.

When interpreting Scripture and Bible prophecy, don't forget that the prophets spoke using terms and idioms familiar to their audience. In other words, God isn't hiding His meaning, but revealing it to people in a simple enough way for them to clearly understand Him. Who were the people? Peasants—simple, non-abstracting folk who were largely illiterate and hardly theologians. In fact, the theological elite were the ones Jesus warned would overthink His message and ruin the meaning. When the *obvious* in the message is reinterpreted through a modern lens, predictions of the end of the world can become outlandish.

This is what happened to Jewish theology in the centuries following the destruction of their Temple in AD 70. The Bible was (and is) a Hebrew book, but when the Hebraic Jews were scattered by the Romans, they settled in mostly “Hellenized” regions of the Empire. In other words, their thinking evolved from Hebrew into Greek—they began to think and interpret the Scripture in the same manner as the pagan Greeks. That's where the Jewish Talmud came from—a huge reinterpretation of Scripture developed to account for the absence of the Temple and Temple sacrifices. This opened the door for all kinds of strange and mystical ideas to seep into their theology. Take the Bet Alfa synagogue for instance...

Bet Alfa Synagogue in Israel was rediscovered when a construction crew cut into a huge mosaic synagogue floor. Archeologists dated the elaborate floor to late Roman times—after the inception of the Talmud. The floor's cartoonish images reveal how their interpretation of Scripture went badly wrong. The center of the floor is emblazoned with a large circle bearing the image of Helios, the sun-god—in a synagogue—surrounded by a complete array of zodiac signs—in a synagogue—which is further framed by images of Biblical accounts. To date, archeologists discovered six more such synagogues in Israel, as well as many with similar pagan motifs—effigies of Zeus, carved Medusa heads in Jewish synagogues throughout the Roman world. Here's why this is important...

In order to reinterpret prophecy and the spiritual conundrum of the loss of their Temple, the Jews sought answers not only in Scripture, but in pagan mysticism, including “signs” in the heavens—what we call *astrology*. The Bible

clearly speaks about signs in the heavens—wouldn't this be the same sort of thing? In a word, *no*.

In his zeal to make the imminent return of Christ more predictable, Scott Clark alleged that the “signs” of the end described in Revelation 12 referred to the transit of planets through various constellations, telling the story of redemption, the second coming and even the exact day of Christ's birth.[†] This idea is at the very least a gross misunderstanding of the distinct Old Testament imagery employed in the passage and the structure of the Book of Revelation. Its path also runs dangerously parallel with astrology. *Dangerous?* Indeed—it encourages Christians to look to the stars to predict the future like pagan mystics—like astrology.

The same could be said of John Hagee and his best-selling book, *Four Blood Moons*, in which he interprets typical lunar eclipses as end-times signs, or David Meade, who popularized the paranoid myth of the rogue planet (or star or asteroid) Nibiru hurtling through the solar system at the end of 2017, wreaking havoc on the earth and ushering in the second coming. Nibiru never showed up. ‡

Other problematic end-times literature of the past includes Jonathan Cahn's *The Harbinger* which misapplies to America God's covenantal promises with Israel, books on Bible codes, *The Jupiter Effect*—a paranoid and ridiculous money-maker of the '70's, Y2K and the related fear-generators at the turn of the millennium, and so forth. We love predictability, and we love to be scared by the predictions.

Conclusion

Jesus is coming, and nothing can stop Him; He is coming, and no one can predict Him. He didn't say when, He just said, “Soon”. He was also explicit and even harsh concerning people who make presumptions as to the timing of His

[†] Tim McHyde said of Scotty Clark's method of interpretation “Clarke's theory, like all invented prophecy theories, depends on taking a verse out of its context and re-purposing it to serve some new theory. When you ignore the context of a verse, you are set up to misinterpret it. That's how you turn a solid reliable Bible prophecy into an unreliable quasi-biblical man-made prophecy interpretation.”

[‡] *Nibiru* is a theoretical “Planet X” orbiting the sun at a tremendous distance, and, though minor gravitational perturbations affecting the orbits of the outer planets, including Pluto, have been detected, no large or threatening planetary body has been discovered. Further, Nibiru conspiracy theorists fail to recognize that a planetary or dark stellar object would take decades, if not centuries to fall into the sun's gravity-well, and even then, it would need a considerable “push” from an even more massive object to leave its own orbit.

return. Like the *Four Blood Moons*, the Revelation 12 planetary alignment of October-November-December 2017 (Clark admitted he did his math 'incorrectly'), Y2K and the all-but-forgotten Jupiter Effect, they were all non-events.

Thus, at Calvary we will not promote or acknowledge any person, 'prophet' or movement that sets dates for the second coming of Christ—the hermeneutic of such people amounting to little more than medieval rabbinical mysticism and Christianized astrology. Jesus, in Revelation 2, threatened with damnation Christians who claimed to know "God's deep secrets" and said that such 'secrets' were actually from Satan. The signs of His coming are not *deep* and they're never wrong.

If you, dear reader, consider this position heresy, please be patient—the truth or error of it will become evident with the passage of time. If you are convinced of a date, I hope you're right—I look forward to the rapture and return of Christ. If you're wrong, repent, and don't forget to apologize to those you misled. And to Jesus, too...