

“How to Calculate when Jesus will Come – without even being a prophet!”

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What follows is my response to the outbreak of Blood Moon Fever and the Shemitah Virus, and more broadly, to the rapidly-spreading epidemic of predictions of Jesus' near return between 2015-2017. I offer it to the Christ whose coming I love.

Something like 41% of the American people believe that Jesus will *definitely or probably* return by 2050. That figure shoots up to 58% when the pollster asked white evangelical Americans.¹ So, once someone starts with that basic assumption, that we must be in the Latter Days, very few will question it: it now becomes a question of detail and *voilà*, a whole cottage industry springs up.²

My readers know that I am a “Matthew 24:36 Strict Constructionist”: that when Jesus said that no human – or angel, or the Son of Man – knows the time of the Second Coming, his original intent was to forbid all date-setting, not just the “day or hour” but any time at all; and that he meant that we should leave off amateur predictions of the End Times.

I mention this verse, which is found in my Bible in Matthew 24; but I suspect that some imp has gone around and whited out v. 36 from many copies.

There are two types of individuals who set dates for the Second Coming: the one who regards him or herself as a “prophet” who receives messages from God; the one who insists that he or she *not* be called “prophet”. I break them down as follows:

Date-Setter by Revelation – an early example is that in the 2nd century, a man named Montanus claimed that Jesus would soon return, to a little town in Asia Minor; more recently, all sorts of prophets – and psychics – predict the Second Coming – we can probably put Emanuel Swedenborg in this group, also Edgar Cayce; so did Joseph Smith, founder of the Latter-Day Saints. Just go on YouTube and you’ll find plenty of these dreams and visions, and most are not cult leaders.

Date-Setter by Calculation – these are the people whom we will study in this article. They base their predictions principally on the Bible text or some strained reading of the Bible text. They dazzle us with numbers, dozens of verses, references to lunar eclipses, killer asteroids,

¹ <http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/jesus-christs-return-to-earth/>

² The best list I know of failed predictions is found here <http://www.bible.ca/pre-date-setters.htm>.

flipflopping magnetic fields, RFIDs,³⁴ chemtrails, earthquakes, assertions about how many years a “generation” really is, and so on. Let’s call them **End-Time Number Crunchers** or **ETNCs**.⁵

I guess we could consider a third group the **Blended Date-Setters**; they appeal now to their calculations, now to dreams and visions. Here’s one, a man who sets dates according to Jewish feasts, and also collects testimonies of “Dreams and Visions of September [2015] Rapture”; for example, he tells of one dream about how Puerto Rico was covered by snow – hence the End is Nigh.⁶



Who are the End-Time Number Crunchers (ETNCs)?

One of the reasons **ETNCs** eschew the label of “prophet” is because Deut 18:15-22 prescribes the death penalty for all who make “presumptuous” predictions, that is, “if the word does not come to pass or come true.”⁷ I have run across a number of these date setters who use the title Watchman or Watchman on the Wall (see Isa 62:6, Ezek 3:17, 33:6). Watchmen set dates and times, I guess, but they have a Get out of a Stoning Free card if they make mistakes in their calculations.

³ See my article on this topic, <http://openoureyeslord.com/2012/10/01/obamacare-microchips-biochips-and-march-4/>

⁵ Not to be confused, of course, with the Etats et Territoires Non Coopératifs, nor the East Turkistan National Center. <http://www.acronymfinder.com/ETNC.html>

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c42Agg0a5do>

⁷ I just noticed that false prophecy and homosexual sex were two of the 18 capital crimes in Israel; ironic, given that so many prophets today mention homosexual marriage as a sign of the End Times.

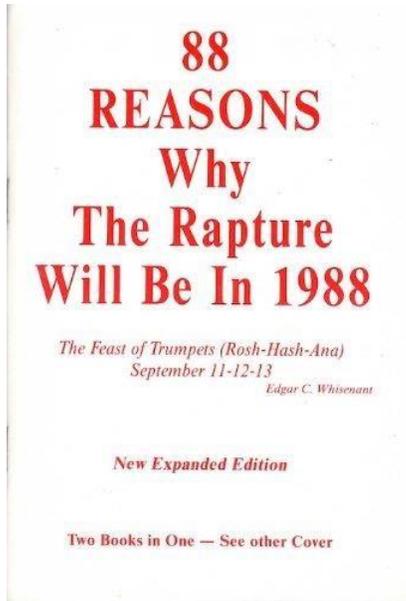
Community Chest



Get out of a stoning
free card!

- William Miller is a classic example of an [End-Time Number Cruncher](#); some of whose followers went on to found the Seventh-Day Adventists. He calculated from Daniel 8:14 that the Second Coming would occur in 1843. Then in 1844. When it did not, he realized that he had miscalculated: people always forget that there is no 0 BC or 0 AD, meaning you always have to subtract a one when you go from BC to AD! So he reset the clock for 1845. When Jesus did not appear, it became known as the Great Disappointment. To his credit, Miller confessed his system a failure.⁸
- Edgar Whisenant published the widely-read *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*; I picked up a copy some years after that date at a used book sale. After that failure, he kept resetting the dates, the latest being 1997.

⁸ Miller wrote to his followers: “I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe that the day of the Lord is near, even at the door.” See Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), p. 256.



- Of more recent memory, Harold Camping of Family Radio predicted the Second Coming would take place – probably, “because I’m not a prophet you know!” – in 1994; then in May, 2011; then in October, 2011. He based his ideas partly on his “discovery” that Noah’s flood happened in 4990 BC, and the rest added up from there. Before his death he fully recanted his calculations.



- Jack Van Impe is one of the most egregious of the Number Crunchers, but he’s so hard to pin down. I think his last prediction was for 2012. Pat Robertson is almost as bad.
- Rapture Ready website offers a mind-numbing logarithm called the Rapture Index, showing when the rapture will come – but no date settings, mind! –, based on a sliding scale of “signs of the end” (a lot of which are not to be found in the Bible: oil prices, civil rights, trade deficits).

I’m only dealing with people who would be thought of as evangelicals – we could have mentioned Charles Taze Russell (founder of the Jehovah’s Witnesses) or Herbert Armstrong as other calculators.

End-Time Number Crunchers have a highly adapted gift of rewriting their predictions, once they have failed. I like to call this the “Grangerford Calculus of Bible Prophecy.” Fans of *Huckleberry Finn* might recall how Huck stayed with the Grangerford family, and how he heard all about the poetry of their late daughter, Emmeline – “Buck said she could rattle off poetry like nothing. She didn’t ever have to stop to think. He said she would slap down a line, and if she couldn’t find anything to rhyme with it would just scratch it out and slap down another one, and go ahead.”⁹ ETNCs do the same: *They can rattle off prophecy like nothing. They don’t ever have to stop to think. They can slap down a prediction, and if they don’t see it fulfilled, they just scratch it out and slap down another one, and go ahead.* The Grangerford Method.

End-Time Number Crunchers don’t start from scratch, that is, they don’t just open the Bible and go from there. Most follow a dispensationalist eschatology, as popularized by the Left Behind books and movies: Van Impe, Hal Lindsay, Pat Robertson, Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Mark Blitz and John Hagee of Blood Moons fame, to name a few. Even the president of Dallas Seminary, John Walvoord, dipped into calculating in his best-selling *Armageddon, the Middle East and the Oil Crisis*.¹⁰



I Time is running out for Messrs. Hagee and Blitz

And most who set dates are also basing their calculations, not on their own numbers, but on the mathematics done by these scientific whizzes. It strikes me as more than coincidence that Whisenant was a NASA engineer; Camping was a civil engineer. Frank J. Tipler (Jesus will come before 2057!) is a physicist and mathematician. Even mathematician and physicist Isaac

⁹ <http://genius.com/Mark-twain-the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn-chap-17-annotated>, see p. 106.

¹⁰ Walvoord published *Armageddon, the Middle East and the Oil Crisis* during the original oil crisis, in 1973. He released it in a new edition in time for the 1991 Iraq War. While not setting an exact date, he declared that we must be in the End Times, since Armageddon would be fought over oil, and the world’s oil reserves were – at that time – thought to be dwindling to nothing. *Ipsa facto*, it’s the end of the world.

Newton predicted that the world would end in 2000! Van Impe has his own data base: he has memorized over 14,000 Bible verses and quotes them at will; but I am not clear on whether that makes him a better student of Bible prophecy: when he makes predictions, he has thousands of proofs at his fingertips, but mostly his predictions are wrong as all the others’.

Now why are such people so likely to turn up at prophecy conferences? Two reasons:

One: The first is based on the logical fallacy known as the Appeal to Authority. Professor Soand-So is (supposedly) an authority in some field. People then assume that the professor must be an expert regarding all topics.

“Dr. Smith says that Bigfoot most certainly exists – and he’s a respected neurosurgeon!” is a nice example of this fallacy.

This also works with “and she has a doctorate” (often unearned) or “and he’s a former Navy Seal!” or a host of other achievements.

The trouble is that there is always a segment of people with good education forget that they don’t know everything about everything. It can lead to a lack of basic humility. We see selfproclaimed experts all the time on the news, giving out their opinions on topics for which they have no actual background.

Two: perhaps the scientific mind is trained to look for the tiny details. And when some of these people look into Scripture, they focus on data in a meticulous and microscopic level. For example, most of us read John 3:16 and gather that it is all about the gospel – God loves us, Jesus came to save us, we need to believe in him. But some will look at the same text and say, *But did you notice that the letter “e” appears 16 times in this verse in the King James [and it’s often enough the KJV!], that it is the 16th verse, and that if you take the sum total of the number of references to God and the Son and multiply it by itself (4 squared) it also adds up to...16!* The so-called “Bible code” buffs fall into this category.

End-Time Number Crunchers display an improbably high capacity to take any current event and be able to find its prediction in the Bible. Iran nuclear deal? *It’s in there.* Where did all those honeybees get to? *In there.* Wildfire in California this summer? *Yup.* The computer system crashes on the New York Stock Exchange on July 8? *Part of Bible prophecy, says Jim Bakker!* Obama stops off to see Stonehenge on the way home from a NATO summit? *Yessirree. In the Bible.*¹¹

The only problem is that these Seers can make accurate predictions, *but only in hindsight.* There are individuals who now see that the attack on the World Trade Center was inevitable, according to Bible prophecy – but they didn’t foresee it before the fact! Every business news program has

¹¹ No kidding. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJZo7Bf_TNQ

its experts, who can tell you exactly why we just passed through a recession, or why he knows how this or that stock had to rise or fall. But only after the event. This too is a fallacious way of “predicting” the future, which is popularly known as the Texas Sharpshooter = a man takes shots at the side of a barn. He then goes and draws a circle around each hit, and claims, “See, I hit every target, 100%!” *Gasp! One bulls-eye after another!*¹² To construct some goofy examples: ask them about the winner of the Triple Crown in 2015, or about the result of a roll of the dice, and they will tell you why, biblically, it *had* to have turned up a 12 or a 7 or snake-eyes or the horse *had* to be called American Pharaoh – but could never tell you ahead of time what the Bible outcome must necessarily be, at least not with any degree of accuracy higher than the laws of probability.

People who have the innate ability to manage hundreds of data and come up with a date might strike us “normals” as having an amazing level of self-confidence. They might claim to not be prophets and to be mere humble students of the Bible, and so many of them are. Look at a Van Impe or a Hal Lindsey or even a Chuck Smith¹³: their attempts to hit the target fail again and again, often over decades, and they constantly go home without a stuffed bear; yet despite that, they never miss a beat, they are ready with a smile for their next prediction, and they give the newcomer the sense that this is the first time they have attempted to do calculations.



Let’s put these **Cool-Headed Smiling End-Time Number Crunchers** to one side.

¹² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tcBsryYd6s “Confirmation bias” is another useful term, see the same video. Another important concept is called *Vaticinium ex eventu*, which happens when a person makes a prediction of an event, but only after the event has already happened.

¹³ <http://calvarychapel.pbworks.com/w/page/13146568/1981>

But why not watch and see what happens when your favorite **ETNC** is challenged, and it will come to light how strong is the force of their ego. I have run across so many of these people that I have come to think of **Hot-Headed End-Time Date Calculators** as a *personality type*. People who have a background in behavioral sciences, feel free to chime in, otherwise I'll get the ball rolling!

Behavior Traits

Intensely microscopic in their study, that is a trait we have already mentioned. Along with this we should mention “patternicity.”¹⁴ I prefer this recent label rather than apophenia, which is often used in terms of mental disease. Patternicity is based on the fact that all humans believe they see meaning in random data. But some people have an unusually high disposition toward seeing patterns. The compulsive gambler watches how the dice roll and figures out a “system” for beating the odds at Vegas. Others see the face of the Virgin in a tortilla. Others see Satanic symbols where most people do not, and accuse the rest of us of being dull or deceived.

When it comes to Bible prophecy, certain individuals see patterns and look askance at those who cannot see the writing on the wall. An example: Jesus said that “this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.” (Matt 24:34). What means this statement? One interpretation, which I find exegetically unlikely, is that this last “generation” began with the founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948. Using that as a starting point, some **Number Crunchers** argue that in the Old Testament, a generation was equal to exactly 40 years. I find this too to be unlikely, for two reasons: first, “generation” in Matt 24 might mean “this race”, not a generation of the human family; second, because even if a generation is meant to be a length of time, no two generations are of equal length. Just take a look at how old was your father when you were born, then his father, then his father – if it adds up to 120, it's a coincidence! This leads to a strange debate indeed: many who take the 40-year figure as the “correct” value of a generation predicted that Christ would return in 1988 (Edgar Whisenant; Hal Lindsey; others). Since Jesus didn't return, others stated that the clock *really* started in 1967, and Christ would return by 2007. *Oops!* Then others started teaching that a generation is not 40 years after all. The Rapture Ready website, no slouch when it comes to setting dates while claiming not to, says a generation is “really” 70-80 years. But few people stop to ask a more basic question: *Is 'this generation' meant to be taken as a fixed mathematical value, like the value of pi?*

The prize for the most arcane calculations in recent days has to go to Harold Camping; the fact that he calculated a month as being no more or less than 29.53059 days might give you an idea of his high level of patternicity.

Conspiracy Thinking. Patternicity or even *apophenia* can provide the basis for conspiracy thinking. Certain individuals “detect” grand programs, carried out by sinister cabals, to take over

¹⁴ <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/patternicity-finding-meaningful-patterns/>

the world, establish a new order, destroy capitalism, impose capitalism, kill Jews, put Jews in power, or whatever variation. People prone to patternicity might flock together: they don't know if the Masons or the Bilderbergs or the Communists or Illuminati or the Skull and Bones or the UFOS or the Nephilim are plotting to take over the world; but they are all convinced beyond doubt that *someone* is doing so, and now it's just a question of who. True aficionados claim to be able to trace the conspiracy for century after century.

Look, conspiracies do exist. 9/11 was a conspiracy by any reckoning, and someone conspired to shoot JFK, even if only one individual. But conspiracy thinking as a means of interpreting the whole reality is usually accompanied by higher-level paranoid approach to life.¹⁵

Prophecy "experts" *simply know* that someone alive today is the antichrist; it's simply a case of figuring out who. Given that no-one is forcing people to receive a 666 tattoo or has conquered the world, the Patternicity folks need to apply their powers of observation to determine who is the sneaky-Pete who is *shortly going to be* the antichrist. Just google "Hillary antichrist" or any other presidential candidate to see what I mean.

This explains a common trait of ETNCs and Conspiracy Theorists: that no matter how many of their "proofs" you can discredit, rather than engaging you on it, they will immediately urn to other "proofs" from their huge data bank. "That bright light in Pennsylvania turned out to be just a helicopter!" you say to a UFOlogist. "Yes, but what about this photo, this sighting in England, and this pilot who blacked out?" they will respond. ETNCs are nothing if not agile. "You said that the Mayan Calendar predicted the Second Coming at the end of 2012!" "Oh sure, but, what about these other hundred proofs?" This is the false notion that a thousand very weak arguments adds up to a strong case.

Black and White Thinking. If it is definitely the End of Time – and fakey prophets almost always say it is – then there must be no cooperation with any other viewpoints, with people who are not exactly aligned with you politically or religiously. The Essenes in Jesus' day (famous for the Dead Sea Scrolls) took the same line – it's the End of the World as We Know It, so anyone who doesn't hang out in our commune is a child of Belial; demonic, damned. Some [End-Time Number Crunchers](#) recognize gray areas, but for the truly [Angry ETNCs](#), you are either in, or out. IN is the prophet's camp, OUT is the 99% of the world that doesn't follow the agenda. Because of this apocalyptic dualism, it's no-holds-barred on condemning the Other. But wait, what's this? Didn't Paul say something like, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all"? Indeed he did, in Romans 12:18. But Paul lived in the good old days, when it was possible and recommendable to *Get Along and Play Nice*. But the End is upon us, so we are released from that command! The Hot-Headed Prophetic Calculators might imply that you

¹⁵ See my essay on the Paranoid Style in <http://openoureyeslord.com/2014/12/19/the-paranoid-style-in-americanpolitics-has-its-50th-anniversary/>

peaceable people are compromisers, cowardly, or, heaven help us, effeminate. You probably don't even pack a gun!

This mentality seems to explain the frequency of insulting and even vulgar language used by the Number Crunchers against those who question their rightness.

The Angry Prophetic Calculator personality type is extraordinarily sensitive to who is Good and who Evil. If you are reading my blog, odds are good that you are Evil. Sorry about that!

Inferiority Feelings and Defensiveness. When a true person of God speaks, he or she should be glad to show you in the Bible where they find their truth. False Number Crunchers, at least the ones I have run into, push back, and hard. Look out for some variation of, "You think you're better than me?!" Watch out for people who immediately toss 2 Pet 3:3-10 at you, implying that to reject the Number Cruncher is tantamount to rejecting God: "scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming?'" *You scoffer, you!*

Sociology

Sociology can be a great tool, although we must be careful not to define all our behaviors in its terms.

Self-Reinforcing Groupthink. Ironically, Calculators are the first to accuse the rest of us of being "sheeple", that is, those who blindly go along. But no-one is more influenced by the crowd than the [End-Time Number Crunchers](#). Just look at the hundreds of videos on YouTube and you will see a whole world of people who have the end of the world figured out. And because many of these "prophets" have high degrees of patternicity in their personality make-up, then almost every one of their predictions follows this group narrative: "The end is near, of that there is zero doubt. Now the only question is when, where, and how. And here I am to show you those answers or at least raise those questions." [End-Times Number Crunchers](#) have a habit of pointing to their own small herd to back up their thinking: "the fact that so many people are talking about the nearness of the Second Coming must mean something!"

Group Narrative and Cognitive Dissonance. From the world of playing cards, we have the marvelous phrase "Double-Down". In Blackjack, when someone looks at his cards and thinks he has a good hand, he might double his bet, to try to double his winnings. "Double down" has lately become a part of political discourse, too: "Presidential Candidate X said something controversial, but instead of retracting what he said, he Doubled Down!" *Instead of apologizing when he said that women should be paid less than men, he doubled down and said "and all Latinos too!"*

What happens when [ETNCs](#) set a date, and are then proven wrong? In the case of William Miller, he "doubled-down" and said he was off by one year. Harold Camping doubled down, twice. But these two men eventually saw their failures for what they were and retracted their

whole systems of prophecy. To use another term from gambling, they “cashed in their chips.” Others, like Edgar Whisenant, just kept doubling-down.

At one time, the experts believed that anyone who was disgraced by a failed prediction would just “cash in their chips”. Isn’t that what reasonable people would do? In fact no, and here I must recommend the ground-breaking book, *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group That Predicted the Destruction of the World* by Leon Festinger and others (1956; some aspects of the book are now thought to be out of date; it’s a Kindle Book¹⁶). The basic outline: a woman named Dorothy Martin predicted that a great flood would destroy Chicago in 1954, but the good news was that her group would be rescued at the last minute by a UFO, which would land in the backyard. The sociologists heard of the group and infiltrated it in order to study what happened. They guessed that when the UFO and the flood did not happen, everyone would just wander off and resume their normal lives.

So, no UFO for the Chicagoans and no flood, although one of the members did claim to receive a revelation that God had decided to spare Chicago after all.

But in general, the members experienced intense confusion, the newly-coined expression, “cognitive dissonance” – the anxious mental state that occurs when a person tries to straddle two utterly contradictory beliefs (The UFO *will* come! But the UFO *didn’t* come!).

What happened came as a surprise to the sociologists – the morning after the debacle, the group’s leaders called the papers in order to publicize their message to the wide world. Festinger’s study concludes, among other things, that if someone has deeply committed to a cause, and has taken steps that cannot be reversed (broken family ties, quit jobs) then disappointment or “disconfirmation” – remember William Miller and the Great Disappointment – will make some of the believers *more* fervent, not less! I have seen testimonies which go like this: “My wife left me, my church rejected me, I lost my job, because I was dedicated to studying the Second Coming.” These guys are more likely to push ahead rather than back off; in order to survive, they have to leave themselves with justification for their failures.

One card illustration more:

Deal a New Hand. **End-Time Number Crunchers** are just the sort of people who are able to create an escape mechanism when their prophecies fail. After all – if you have the skill to figure out hundreds of reasons to prove how the End will come, then you also have the skills to invent an escape hatch. They take their cognitive dissonance (Christ *will* come on this date! But he *didn’t* come on this date!) and show precisely why on the one hand they are still correct despite the negative evidence. Some will say that Christ did come, but invisibly. And an **ETNC** can do

¹⁶ http://www.amazon.com/When-Prophecy-Fails-Psychological-Destructionebook/dp/B00MRTON0A/ref=sr_1_1_twi_kin_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1441924410&sr=81&keywords=When+Prophecy+Fails

all this without incurring any personal blame: *Don't blame me, I was right, even though I was wrong!* We see pundits on the news saying the same sort of thing: “Hey, I was right when I said the Republican would win, even though as we now know the Democrat won.”

The authentic Masters of Prophetic Calculation are able to say “I was off, somewhat!” but not “Sorry, I was wrong.” Here we must mention Hal Lindsey, Pat Robertson, Jack Van Impe, Edgar Whisenant, let alone the mobs of people who predict away in anonymity. Behavioral scientists have noted that while people think they can remember their past, they are capable of rewriting their stories so that now they “remember” they hadn't fully been taken in by the Calculators. Some of Camping's followers have “forgotten” that they were 100% convinced of the October 2011 date – they are not lying, they have genuinely rewritten their memories.¹⁷ Followers of Chuck Smith argued after the fact that he had never set a date for the Second Coming – which indeed he did, proven by the fact that people gathered in his church to await it! And in the case study below, “Ted” below, forgot that he had predicted that the world would end in 2011, until I copied and pasted his own statement and showed it to him.

Spirituality

As a Christian, I find help in using psychological and sociological categories to understand the [End-Time Number Crunchers](#). But I know that beyond this lies the spiritual aspect. Paul showed that deception is a tool of the evil one, and that one of his games is to confuse believers about Christ's return:

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come [alternate translation – “is at hand”]. Let no one deceive you in any way. (2 Thess 2:1-3)

Satan wants to leave us in a state of turmoil, to distract us from the real work of God in this world. It doesn't matter if he does it by a **Date-Setter by Revelation** (“by a spirit”) or by [EndTime Number Crunching](#) – both are two paths up the same mountain, both achieve the same ends: distraction, doubt, disappointment with God, abandonment of the church.

Pride. The Date-Setter by Calculation is, in my experience, brimming with confidence. And selfconfident people are convincing people: “How can so-and-so be mistaken, when he seems so absolutely sincere and unshakeable in his predictions?” If it helps, look up the [Hot-Headed Number Cruncher's](#) name – the internet makes it easy! – and see if this same, assured person has made mistaken predictions in the past. Many of them have failed again and again, but each time when they show up yet again with a prophecy, they speak as people unburdened by doubt. And

¹⁷ <http://religiondispatches.org/a-year-after-the-non-apocalypse-where-are-they-now/>

the highest degree of pride is the type of statement made by Whisenant: “Only if the Bible is in error am I wrong...” Trust me, trust the Bible, it’s all the same. An ETNC may claim to be just a humble student of the Word, but that mask may slip when once you question whether they really know what they are talking about.

At the same time, the [Number Cruncher](#) is marked by vacillation. How is it possible, one might ask, that a person be absolutely convinced that the Lord will return on this date, and give lists of proofs why this must be so; and then at the same time turn around and qualify it all with the words *perhaps, possibly, probably, maybe, could be?* I suspect their self-confidence is on some deeper level tempered by their knowledge that they might fail, since so many others have failed in the past; it’s a mechanism for stuffing down cognitive dissonance.

To sum up, typical [Hot-Headed End-Time Number Crunchers](#) might look like this:

He or she has a basic underlying theological structure (often a dispensationalist or “Left Behind” scenario) which cannot be questioned; is certain that we are in the End Times; strikingly adept at managing high volume of data, be it from the Bible text, world news, or other information; focused on minute details which the rest of us don’t see or value; may claim that invisible human or extraterrestrial forces are really running the world; acknowledge that Jesus told us not to set dates, but has a clever way around that prohibition; uses past events to prove that their “system” explains things, but cannot seem capable of predicting future ones, except, of course, by luck; justifies their failures and set new predictions without losing their basic confidence in their method; claims to be humble, but cannot get along with people outside a small circle; uses insulting language; exhibits high self-confidence on the one hand, but is defensive on the other.

Now, I have seen the above characteristics time and again, so I believe that what follows is not an example of Texas Sharpshooting. For the past three months or so, I have been interacting with a prophecy proponent who is announcing far and wide that the rapture will take place on September 13, 2015 [I am rushing to publish this essay before the 13th, so that it won’t look like 20/20 hindsight on my part]. Name and details are changed. Although I did not feel obligated to do so, I sought and received “Ted’s” permission to write up a case study of him and his methods.¹⁸

¹⁸ Hence I reminded him on September 4 that I had said I was going to write up his story on my blog: “Again, if I don’t hear otherwise, I am planning on posting a case study of your predictions on my blog after Sept 13. Without mentioning your name.” Ted, the same day: “You do what you think is best. I expect to be in Heaven and couldn’t care less!”

CASE STUDY of a PROPHET BY CALCULATION, 2008-2015

I ran into Ted some months ago; we had both commented on the “Charisma News” website, in an article that taught this so-called Shemitah – Blood Moons teaching.

Ted can be found online talking about other topics as well; Chicago professional sports, for example. Both on his own website and across the social media he leaves the simple message:

The Rapture
The Feast of Trumpets
September 13, 2015!

Ted’s website contains about 20 documents and an hour-long video, “The Future Revealed,” which is a presentation of his teaching about the Parable of the Ten Virgins. A main document is titled “Biblical View of Past, Present & Future.” In another, he tells the story of his life, about how he was raised Catholic and later became evangelical. I have read or skimmed through all of his articles.

Readers of Ted’s website don’t quite get a full picture of his personality. In his articles he writes dispassionately; but one-on-one his tone is sharper: “Why would you bother to check out what a lunatic like me is basing his wild statements upon?” he asked me, before telling me I was too “sanctimonious” to study what he has written. Ted’s language outside his own site, whether talking about the Chicago Bears or Bible prophecy, is peppered with words such as moron, a joke, nuts, rabid, wolves, know-nothings, ignorant, dense, dullard, misguided, walking garbage, stupid, Biblical ignorance, senseless, pussyfooters, unteachable. “Take your thumb out of your mouth” is one phrase he directed at me.

While Ted acknowledges the presence of Matthew 24:36 in the teaching of Jesus, he shows another set of evidence that God not only sets dates but also reveals them to people.

Theologically, Ted is a dispensationalist, and his Bible is the 1967 New Scofield; he makes it clear that he is not Pentecostal. Ted is emphatic that he is not a prophet, since everything which a prophet says must come to pass; and he does not believe there have been prophets since the Apostle John. “Remember, I am NOT a prophet of God! I am simply using the Scriptures to know the signs of the times.” He is influenced by the dispensationalist F. W. Grant, *The Numerical Bible* in seven volumes – whether it’s 4 or 8 or 10, each number communicates a hidden message. Like many Number Crunchers – Mark Blitz, Harold Camping, others – he based much of his predictions on a symbolic interpretations of the Jewish feasts of Israel. For example, *The rapture will take place on September 13, 2015, because it coincides with the Feast of Trumpets.*

One document asks, “Is This Man the Antichrist?” Here he names the politician Romano Prodi of Italy, although he seems unwilling to state clearly what his own opinion is; but in another document in 2008, he definitely names Prodi as the antichrist. The same goes for the End Times “false prophet”, who he implies is Henry Kissinger. But in the 2015 version of that same document, Prodi and Kissinger have mysteriously disappeared from his predictions!

Which brings us to the point that, the reader has to be careful to note the date of each of Ted’s documents and try to read them in chronological order; only then can we see that his predictions have changed over the last seven or so years. Ted can be seen in one place making clear, unqualified statements about what will happen in the future. Damascus was to be nuked on September 1, 2015, for example. But to me he said, before September 1, that “The total destruction of the city of Damascus, Syria, by a nuclear device *seems likely*.” Only “likely”, now.

But back in 2008 he predicted the following:

According to Ezekiel 38 and 39, Russia will invade Israel with her allies of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Turkey. I believe this will be in October, 2011, and be known as World War III. I believe that “Gog” [the end time leader of Russia] referred to in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is Vladimir Putin who is now the Prime Minister of Russia and chairman of his nations [*sic*] most powerful political faction known as the United Russia Party. The current President of Russia is simply a puppet for Mr. Putin. It will be Vladimir Putin who will direct the invasion of Israel and a first strike nuclear attack upon the United States of America (Ezk. 39:67)! This war will end within 10 days leaving America in shambles and complete her judgment by God (Gal. 6:7).¹⁹

But then I noticed that there were two editions of this same document, one from 2008 – which I just cited – and a revised version from 2015, which is the one available now on his website. And they offered different predictions! I wrote him: “Let’s take a look at your website, where an earlier version of your book, from 2008, states plainly that ‘The Lord Jesus will fulfill the Feast of Trumpets with the snatching up of His bride [the Church] in September, 2011...’ 2011 – That’s four years ago, no? And then, in the 2015 edition of your book, you CHANGED the date to September 13, 2015.”

To put it mildly, Ted did not react well. He accused me of sneaking around and then trying to make him look foolish, but would not answer my question about the 2011 prediction. I pressed him again: “Okay, on your own website, the home page, you predicted that the rapture would take place in Sept 2011...Btw, you also predicted

¹⁹I have argued that the Gog and Magog prediction of Ezekiel has nothing to do with modern Russia; see <http://openoureyeslord.com/2013/01/13/gog-of-magog-is-dead-and-i-have-seen-his-grave/>

that Russia would invade Israel in 2011, on that same page; and also that Romano Prodi would be elected President of the European Union in 2010. He was not.” Three serious missed predictions on Ted’s part.

Ted counter-claimed that he had never predicted that the rapture would happen in September 2011. So I had to literally copy and paste the section from his document to prove that he had made that prediction about 2011.

Ted remained unhappy that I had caught him out; the word “moron” was used. Eventually he conceded the point, but with a dollop of sarcasm. He took me through a long discussion of years, numbers of acres in the Old City of Jerusalem, United Nations events, etc. He eventually admitted that he had been wrong about the 2011 prediction.

Gary, July 15, to focus on this September: “It looks like your next prediction is that the rapture will happen on Sept 13, 2015. Please get in touch with me on my blog when that happens or does not, and we’ll talk. And one or the other of us will admit to being a false teacher. Deal?”

Gary again, July 29 “Listen - why argue now, in July [2015]? If you are still here, let’s talk on September 14, 2015, and you can either tell us you were right, or you can admit failure as a date-setter and announce that you will get out of the Bible prophecy business. Deal?”

Gary on September 1: “I have Sept 13 marked on my calendar - are you still sticking with that date?” [that is, the date of the rapture]

Ted: “ABSOLUTELY!”

Gary: “And you will recant if we are still here on the 14th? Just want to make sure I have this straight.”

Ted: “Will my doing so make you happy? If so, I will. I am in a no lose situation. Sooner or later, I am going to Heaven.”

(I find his use of “sooner or later” a bit worrisome, guessing that after the 14th he will, all things being equal, have some new set of predictions.)

September 7 – I realized that an important date had passed, so I got in touch with him again on “Charisma News”, quoting one of Ted’s predictions about 2015: “The next significant Bible prophecy that will be fulfilled is the war described in Psalm 83 and Isaiah 17. This war will be between Israel and the nations who touch her borders. They will be allied with the Islamic groups known as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Isis (Isa. 17:2-3, 12-14; Jer. 49:23-27). Israel will be victorious in this war that will end with the total destruction of the city of Damascus, Syria, from a nuclear device (Isa. 17:1). This war will end by September 1, 2015.”

The gist: war will break out between Israel and Islamist groups in the summer of 2015, and it will end when Damascus is nuked, by September 1. This all based on complex mathematical and exegetical calculations.

As of the morning of September 14, Ted had yet to respond to my question about Damascus and September 1; nor has he responded to my queries about his failed prediction of the September 13 Rapture.

Update: the afternoon of the 14th, to my great surprise, Ted responded to my question. He took what is the most popular path for a failed prophet – he doubled-down and re-adjusted his figures: “I know I am right about the ‘War of Yom Kippur’ in October 1973 being the day that began the 50 year generation that would witness the 2nd Advent. Therefore, I was one year too early for the happenings that will wake-up the sleeping members of the Church. The Parable of the Ten Virgins WILL be fulfilled within the next 12 months.” That is: I was right, but just off by one year. Gary: I tried to be kind while at the same time pressing him to acknowledge his sin in setting dates: “I am sorry to see that your response however is, ‘okay I’m just off by a year.’ You’ve misled many, many people, some of whom may even today be bailing out on Christ...The lesson you should learn is not to re-adjust your figures, but to chuck all your figures and go on the premise that the Lord is not going to reveal anything to you that he didn’t reveal to the apostles.”

Further Update: I visited Ted's page on Sept 25 and was told “Sorry, we're under maintenance. We are making some updates to the site. We'll be back soon, thanks for your patience.” Later I went back, and saw that the date of the rapture had been pushed back a year: “The prophetic significance of the Feast of Trumpets will then be fulfilled with the ‘snatching out’ [Rapture] of all true, born-from-above believers [Christians]. This blessed event (Ti. 2:13) will take place on **October 2, 2016!**” So, September 2011, then September 2015, then October 2016. And if I may offer my own prediction, it will not end on the last date - will we see a prediction for 2017 or 2018?

I have summarized my story with Ted, not to point him out as an extreme case and certainly not to poke fun, but because he epitomizes what I have seen again and again in those who dare to set dates for the Second Coming. If we add in that he thinks the Federal Reserve is part of the cabal that controls world events, then he seems to fulfill our entire profile, as given above.

CONCLUSION

Of what use is exposing this rising tide of fake predictions? Because I have to confess that, sometimes it feels like I am shoveling back the coming of high tide. Should we leave them alone, or shake our heads wistfully and say, *Well, let's not judge, because, Hey, we all make mistakes!*

No.

No, first, because of God – if Christ told the apostles not to set dates, let alone us, then it must be important to God that we obey him, and of important if we do not.

No, second, because false predictions damage the church and hold the gospel up to ridicule before the world. Every time that a false prediction goes wrong, people walk out on the gospel. And please, let no-one say that they must have been false sheep and would have left anyway! Remember the warning – “whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matt 18:6).

Just yesterday a co-worker at ESEPA was showing me a prediction of how an asteroid will shortly hit the earth and how right after that, Christ will come. He shook his head, sadly, telling me how many Christians he has met who have fallen for such things. And then he told me that back in 2000, his native Nicaragua was swept with End Times Fever. He heard that some people had committed suicide when Jesus did not appear as advertised. And this was not hearsay on his part: his neighbor hanged himself over this.

Convinced now? This is not harmless fun. The false date-setter, of whatever variety, is not an amusing crank. He is not to be let off the hook as a sincere, if confused, fellow.

The [End-Times Number Cruncher](#) is a slippery one, and an angry [ETNC](#) can be both slick and also hostile. When his prediction does not come to pass, he might use the defense, “I never said I was a prophet!” And technically that’s true. But in reality, anyone who sets dates and fails is disobedient to the Lord’s command. The one who says “Look, here is the Christ!” or “There he is!” is wreaking the same havoc (Matt 24:23) as the person who claims to be a prophet. “The Day of the Lord is at hand” (2 Thess 2:1-3) is a sentence words that no mortal man has license to say for the time being. The only valid escape from this behavior is repentance, and a decision to truly honor Christ by walking in the light and living alert until he comes.

Aquinas commented on some statements by Augustine that are right on the money here; I will paraphrase the older English to make it clearer:²⁰

Christ didn’t tell the apostles when he would return, in order that “all may be on watch and ready to meet Christ. And for this reason, when the apostles asked Him about this, Christ answered (Acts 1:7): “It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father has put in His own power.” That is why, as Augustine says (*City of God* 18.53): “He interrupts the fingers of all calculators and commands them to be still.” For what [Jesus] refused to tell the apostles, He will not reveal to other humans. That is the reason why all those who in the past have been misled to reckon

²⁰ <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum623.htm>

the time of his coming have so far proved to be untruthful... The falseness of these past calculations is evident to us today, as will likewise be the falseness of those who even now refuse to stop their calculations.

Come Lord Jesus! When the Father says it is the time. **Related**

Posts, all found on <http://openoureyeslord.com>

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