

Ben Carson Is Asked Pointed Question: When Is Christ's Second Coming?

This week, I interviewed presidential candidate Dr. Ben Carson. This is part one of our interview.

On Christian Identity

Ed Stetzer: Do you describe yourself as an evangelical and if so, or if not, why?

Dr. Ben Carson: I would describe myself first of all as a Christian—evangelical in the sense that I believe we have a responsibility to proclaim the gospel and show other people why we live the way that we do and hopefully that will affect their lives. I think that's a very important component of what we do.

ES: How would a President Carson proclaim the gospel in the White House?

Dr. Carson: By not being a politician.

Politicians do what is politically expedient. I don't believe in that.

I believe you have to do what's right. And I believe there is such a thing as right and wrong.

We've moved away from that model. We've moved toward the model of everything is relative and nobody gets to define right and wrong. I, obviously, don't believe that.

I believe in the Bible, biblical principles. I believe in the Judeo-Christian foundation of this nation and would live accordingly. But the fact is, everybody lives according to

their faith. Even an atheist lives according to their faith.

ES: Could you see yourself sharing the gospel in the Oval Office?

On Sharing the Gospel in the Oval Office

Dr. Carson: I will never use my position to force my beliefs upon someone else. But I will always lead a life that I believe is consistent with the will of God.

ES: You're the first Seventh-day Adventist who is as known on a national scale and people have had questions about Seventh-day Adventism. So a couple of questions related to that.

One of the big emphases in Seventh-day Adventism is the Second Coming. What does it mean that you live in light of that? There is a strong sense of imminence in Seventh-day Adventism. How is that focused in your life?

On the Second Coming of Jesus

Dr. Carson: I obviously do look forward to the return of Christ, you know, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4. I believe that you should lead your life in such a way that every day could be your last day. So you shouldn't be like planning oh, a year from now, five years, I'll do this or 10 years I'll do this. You need to lead the right kind of life as if you were going to die today.

ES: Most Christians believe in a return of Jesus. But in modern political conversation, when a Christian articulates that, people ask, "Does that mean you won't care about certain things because Jesus is coming back soon?" For example, the environment...

Dr. Carson: Well the thing you have to remember, the Bible says—in the book of Psalms—to God, one day is like a thousand years or a thousand years is like a day. You know, so imminent return could mean 3,000 years or 30,000 years—or it could be

tomorrow.

For us to predefine what that means in our minds and then live according to that predefinition I think would be foolish.

ES: Do you think Jesus is coming back in our lifetime?

Dr. Carson: No idea.

But I do recognize what is happening in the world, you know, with the radical Islamic jihadists. I do recognize that it will not be possible to keep nuclear weapons out of their hands forever. And I do realize that they have a mindset that would not preclude them from using them. So, you know, all of that obviously is something of concern.

On Radical Islam

ES: Do you think that the rise of Islamic radicalism is sort of a portent of prophecy?

Dr. Carson: It does seem to fit in with a lot of things that are predicted in the Bible. No question.

On Ellen White and Prophecy

ES: Most people have a general notion—and *Christianity Today* readers would have a stronger notion—of what evangelicals are. But, sometimes evangelicals and Seventh-day Adventists are not sure of one another's beliefs.

Ellen White, of course, is key figure in Seventh-day Adventism. In Seventh-day Adventism, she's talked about as a prophet, specifically mentioning "the spirit of prophecy." How do you perceive Ellen White and her writings?

Dr. Carson: Well, I think she added a lot of light, particularly in the health area and was many years ahead of medical science—no question about that. Where could she have gotten that information because it wasn't known yet?

I think there clearly was some inspiration there. I think some of the things that she wrote were her own opinion. So I'm not one of those people who equate her writings with the Bible by any stretch of the imagination. She said that you shouldn't do that. But her writing, along with the writings of many religious people over the course of the decades, has been enlightening.

ES: So was she a unique prophet for our day or was she one of many who wrote good, helpful things under the inspiration of God?

Dr. Carson: I would seriously doubt that she would be the only person who would be inspired by God.

But you know, as she said herself—and it's what I believe—anything that is written by anyone, you must compare it to the Word of God, and if there's any inconsistency, you must reject it.

ES: Did she have a unique prophetic role or one of many who might have a similar prophetic role?

Dr. Carson: I can't believe that there would only be one prophet.

ES: Is there anyone you look to today who you might say there's a similar "spirit of prophecy" on that person?

Dr. Carson: Let me put it this way, I think there are a lot of people out there today in the spiritual world whom I respect tremendously, who have provided extraordinarily wise counsel. Whether they're inspired or not is very hard to say. But I certainly have a great deal of respect for what they have to say.

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