

Bible Scholar: The NEW Date for Christ's Return

Why one Bible scholar is arguing that Hal Lindsey's famous prediction for Christ's return wasn't so wrong

It's one of the most controversial parables in the Bible: the lesson of the fig tree.

Hal Lindsey, author of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, believed he had unlocked the secrets of this passage in Matthew 24:32-33, suggesting the generation that saw the 1948 rebirth of Israel as a nation—purportedly symbolized by the fig tree—would see the return of Jesus Christ. In what became the world's best-selling nonfiction book of the 1970s, Lindsey wrote a biblical generation is “something like 40 years” and suggested that “within 40 years or so of 1948, all these things could take place.”

But when Jesus didn't return in 1988, Lindsey's interpretation of the passage came under heavy criticism and for many years the church largely shied away from teaching Bible prophecy. Now, World Bible Society President F. Kenton “Doc” Beshore argues Lindsey's interpretation of the passage was correct, but he was wrong about the length of a biblical generation.

Instead of 40 years, Beshore says a biblical generation is actually 70-80 years, basing this on Psalm 90:10: “The days of our life are 70 years; and if by reason of strength they are 80 years.” Based on this, the author of *When?: When Will the Rapture Take Place?* and *The Millennium, the Apocalypse and Armageddon* believes the Second Coming will occur sometime between 2018 and 2028, or 70 to 80 years after 1948. Taking into account the seven-year Tribulation period, Beshore expects the rapture to occur sometime between now and 2021.

“Jesus says in Matthew 24:34 that this ‘born one,’ or ‘this

generation will not pass away until all these things be fulfilled,'" says Beshore, 86, who holds five doctoral degrees in theology. "He pictures Israel as a Jewish boy, born May 14, 1948, that would grow up and become an old man until He comes in glory to establish His millennial kingdom. Now, how long is this generation—this 'born one'? The first meaning of 'born one' is in Psalm 90:10. If you extend that from 1948, the outside date for the millennium would be 2028. Take off seven years for the Tribulation and the outside date for the rapture would be 2021. The rapture could take place before that, but certainly by then."

In *When?* Beshore explains that Jesus during the Olivet Discourse—a special briefing for His disciples about what would take place before and during the Tribulation—used the illustration of a pregnant woman to describe what the "Church Age" would be like. Christ said it would be a long period of time, and at the end there would be two birth pangs and then a birth, Beshore writes.

"We saw almost 1,900 years pass from the start of the Church Age (33 A.D.) until the first birth pang, World War I (1914)," Beshore writes. "The second birth pain came in 1939 with the Second World War, and then the birth of the nation of Israel in 1948. The Lord will return before Israel becomes an old man by age 80 in 2028, and seven years earlier to rapture the church."

But Mark Hitchcock, pastor of Faith Bible Church in Edmond, Okla., and author of *2012, the Bible, and the End of the World* and *The Late Great United States*, doesn't believe the blossoming of the fig tree in Matthew 24:32 refers to Israel.

"It just says the fig tree will blossom and this generation won't pass away until all those things are fulfilled," Hitchcock says. "I just think He's saying, 'Look, when you see all these things happening in the Tribulation period ... that generation won't pass away until all these things are

fulfilled.”

But Beshore says the Bible often uses the fig tree as a symbol for Israel. In Matthew 21, Jesus cursed the fig tree after driving the money-changers out of the Temple—a prophetic foreshadow of Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 A.D, Beshore says. Later, in Matthew 24, Jesus speaks of the blossoming of the fig tree, adding “this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place”—a prophetic reference to the rebirth of Israel in 1948, Beshore says. And that “generation,” or the Jewish boy representing Israel, will live to see the Second Coming, Beshore believes.

“While the Bible says we don’t know the day or hour, it certainly says that we know the times and seasons (1 Thessalonians 5:1-10),” Beshore says. “This Jewish boy growing up demonstrates we are in the time and season of the Lord’s return.”