

Enough with These Crazy Rapture Prophecies

Back in the 1970s, I used to joke that someone was going to write a book titled, "Jesus Is Coming Back in the 1970s," only to publish a new and revised edition a few years later titled, "Jesus Is Coming in the 1980s."

Little did I know that on Jan. 1, 1988, Edgar Whisenant, a former NASA engineer, would publish "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988." Hundreds of thousands of books were sold or given away, creating a national frenzy.

Some Christians even plunged heavily into debt, thinking that they would leave the bills for the Antichrist. Instead, they left them for the collection agency.

Yet, true to form, Whisenant quickly revised his calculations, publishing an updated version of his studies on Jan. 1, 1989, the new year of the rapture. This book was titled "The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989." It, too, went through several revisions as the year of the rapture was adjusted annually, year after year. I kid you not.

Michael Brown: What Does the Bible Say About the End of the Age?

Then there was Harold Camping, who "first predicted that the Judgment Day would occur on or about Sept. 6, 1994. When it failed to occur, he revised the date to Sept. 29 and then to Oct. 2. In 2005, Camping predicted the Second Coming of Christ to May 21, 2011, whereupon the saved would be taken up to heaven in the rapture, and that 'there would follow five months of fire, brimstone and plagues on Earth, with millions of people dying each day, culminating on October 21, 2011, with the final destruction of the world.'"

What is most striking in this sad account is that, despite his previous failures in setting the date for Judgment Day (not to mention some bizarre doctrines that he espoused), many thousands still believed his 2011 prophecy, which received wide attention. It was only after that final failure, only exacerbated by his age (he was about 90 at the time) that put an end to the folly.

The latest, utterly ridiculous prediction is that the rapture will occur before the end of this year. That's right. The clock is ticking rapidly, and we've got a few months, at most, before we're out of here. And many Christians believe this is true!

For the record, I don't believe in a secret, pre-tribulation rapture at all, at any time in the future. Instead, I understand from the Scriptures that the church will meet Jesus in the air when He returns for the world to see, and we will accompany Him back to earth at that time. (For more on this, see the book I co-authored with leading New Testament scholar Craig Keener, "Not Afraid of the Antichrist: Why We Don't Believe in a Pretribulational Rapture.")

Have Millions of Christians Been Misled About the Second Coming of Jesus?

That being said, I do not divide over this issue, and some of the finest Christians on the planet today believe in a pre-tribulation rapture. And the purpose of this article is not to debate the pre-tribulation doctrine.

Instead, it is to expose the latest, completely unfounded, pre-tribulation prophecy, especially since it claims to deduce all this information *from the first word of the first line of the first book of the Hebrew Bible*.

Yes, from the opening letters of Genesis, *b-r-sh-y-t*, traditionally rendered, "In the beginning," C. J. Lovik has deduced that we will be out of here by the end of this year.

As a student of the Word and, more importantly, as a Hebrew language scholar, I can assure you that this is absolute rubbish. Rubbish!

You might as well as deduce the date of the Lord's return using the first line of your local phone book. The results would be just as bogus.

Lovik posted his claims in a 2018 YouTube video that has now been viewed more than 1.8 million times. And, showing no signs of temerity as the dates drew nearer, he released his predictions in digital, written form in 2022. (The video is titled, "Is the End of Days Prophesied in the First Word of the Bible?")

I only found out about this recently when people started posting links to his video on the AskDrBrown YouTube channel. So I decided to watch the first few minutes, during which time Lovik completely misused the Hebrew text, then fast-forwarding to the end, where he proclaimed with certainty that the church of Jesus would not be here on earth by the end of 2023. (Mr. Lovik might be a sincere, Jesus-loving believer. But his claims are dead wrong.)

The Danger of an Exaggerated End-Time Mentality

I actually took a few minutes on my Line of Fire broadcast to address his video, subsequently producing three other, short and relevant videos.

In one, I demonstrated graphically that the ancient Hebrew letters (called paleo-Hebrew), once they became an alphabet, no longer contained pictographic meanings. (The letters originally came from pictures, just like our English alphabet, which goes back to the same, original pictographic sources as the Greek and Hebrew alphabets.) I also explained that in their earliest form, the Hebrew letters did not stand for numbers either. (That development came centuries later.)

In another video, I produced absolutely astonishing insights from the words "In the beginning," all from the English words, before explaining that it was complete hogwash and that I had made the whole thing up. I was trying to illustrate the danger of reading "hidden" meanings into the letters.

In yet another video, I put the "secret pictographic" meaning of the Hebrew letters to the test, asking viewers to decipher two sentences in Hebrew, both consisting of just two words, using the alleged pictographic meanings.

To illustrate this here using English, let's take my father's name, Abe.

The argument would be that the letter A originally meant "ox," therefore standing for something strong. B originally meant "house," speaking of some kind of dwelling place. As for E, let's say it originally meant "eagle," so, something that soars in the air.

What, then, would be the "meaning" of my dad's name? It would signify that he was a strong leader, the man of the house, one who lifted all of us up. Yes, that's the kind of stuff people are reading into the words of the Hebrew Bible. The sky is the limit in terms of what you can "deduce."

It's the exact same thing with the Hebrew letters, which, to repeat, are simply that: letters, not symbols with secret pictographic meanings. (If you'd like to watch an in-depth explanation, go [here](#).)

So, to illustrate the point, I listed the alleged pictographic meanings for these four Hebrew words, the first of which (allegedly) consisted of *ox* + *ox goad*, with the second (allegedly) consisting of *mark* (as in putting a mark on something) + *head* + *fishhook* + *fence*. These were the alleged pictographic meanings of these various letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

Some of the “interpretations” we received included: “ox goad + ox = get the ox to go; mark + head + fishhook + fence = aim the fishhook to the head and either 1. but can’t access the fishing spot because blocked by a fence or maybe the good fishing spot is fenced off... Or 2. guard your fish cache with a fence so no one steals them while you’re still fishing.”

And what, in reality, did the Hebrew words mean? “Do not murder.” They were taken straight from the Ten Commandments. (The second sentence, which received equally farfetched, totally disparate “interpretations,” was also from the Ten Commandments: “Do not commit adultery.”)

Yet when I expose this nonsense—there is no other word for it—some people react as if I had spat on the Bible or challenged their most sacred beliefs. It is really sad to see. Aren’t the words God spoke to us, words that are intelligible and understandable and mean what they say, words of life and truth, enough for us?

It is even sadder, though, and more disturbing, when people actually think that, hidden in the first word of Genesis, is a prophecy that Jesus will remove the church from the Earth by the end of 2023.

This is absolute madness, not to mention a shocking indictment of our immaturity. And how could anyone really think that Jesus was going to rapture His people out this year when there is so much more we must accomplish here in His service?

Back in 1988, a friend asked me if I was going to read the 88 *Reasons* book, which predicted the rapture on September 12 of that year. I responded with a smile, “I’ll read it on September 13.”

Well, please do archive this article and check back here on January 1, 2024. I assure you that this article will age well. The “End of Days” video and book will not. Watch and see. {eoa}

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