

I Kissed Dating Goodbye

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In the 90s, a now famous pastor wrote a book entitled, "I Kissed Dating Goodbye" in which he details his view that dating as it stands is void of Christian interaction. He believed that dating had no limits and could hurt rather than help, and that people did not use dating as a means to find a mate but as a means to promote an ungodly and promiscuous lifestyle. In some ways, he was right and I would agree with him. But I believe that dating can be a good enough method if both parties understand that it is about finding a mate for marriage rather than "hooking up." However, this month's article has nothing to do with the dating scene.

Just recently, I was featured in the Faces of the Faith section in the Reading Eagle, my local newspaper, as one of the pastors in the area. In the same issue on the first week of the new year, there was [another article](#) about a woman in Georgia who is telling people that judgment day is coming on May 21, 2011. This grabbed my interest because as I was coming home from buying a ton of these newspapers for family and friends to see, shoved in my mesh gate was a tract about the same prediction!

I want to tell you a little about this specific tract and then I want to talk about the issue that comes up from time to time about people dating the rapture and other end times events. First, let's look at this particular proclamation that this lady in Georgia supports. I have never been willing to be dogmatic about these types of things. I

enter into discussions about the end times with extreme caution because we simply don't know or understand everything the Bible says about the end times. It is hard to be dogmatic about events that might not happen the way we think they will.

This tract simply stated the reasoning behind the proclamation that the judgment day is May 21, 2011. I have several issues with this upfront. One of them is simply this: what judgment day are these folks referring to? The Bible talks about judgment in several different ways. In a real sense, the rapture is a judgment day, because those who are left behind have clearly been judged as unbelievers and sinners. In another sense, the return of Christ and the battle of Armageddon is a judgment day against the unbelievers as well. And then after the millennial reign of Christ is the Great White Throne judgment of unbelievers. So, to which day are they referring?

If it's the rapture, we can't date that day, as I'll explain later. If it's the day of Christ's physical return to the Mount of Olives, the rapture must happen first! And I'm still here, as well as others I know to be believers. Finally, and the most amusing pick, if the day is the Great White Throne judgment they are referring to, it happens after the millennial reign. Jesus hasn't been here for 1,000 years! It's almost laughable if so many believers were not flocking to these arguments. And we're just talking about the title of the tract so far! I know. I over-think

some things, but I think believers should use the brains God gave them.

Let's continue through the tract. How do they know it's such a specific day in May 21, 2011? Well, they start with the last judgment day in the Bible. Which judgment day is that? Once again we have the same problems. Could it be the day in which Israel was dispersed in the Exile? That was a judgment day according to the prophets of Israel. Could it be the day God struck the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? Could it be the day of God's judgment on the Tower of Babel? Nope. None of those. This judgment day is when Noah went into the ark and the floods wiped out all of the earth and God essentially "started over." So I suppose they would see this as a "universal" judgment day over the whole earth.

Let's give them that much rope and see where it leads. Now we have to figure out when that day was. But they already know that. It was in the year 4990 BC. Remember, I'm only telling you the evidence found in this tract. Now I must ask: how do we know it was that year? Are we talking the Hebrew calendar? The Roman calendar? Did they make all the calculations to convert calendars correctly? Did they just take that year out of their favorite commentary? Or my favorite question: where they there when God sent the flood? I am attempting to be even-tempered in my analysis here. These are all questions that are not backed up in the tract. Let's stop "quenching the Spirit" with our questions and accept that they are right on the date for now and continue to my favorite two parts to get that date above.

After they state the date, they do some easy math and then get 2011. Here's how: they take 4990 BC and add 7,000 years, and then add one more year to get 2011. Now I know

you've got your calculator in your hand. Good for you. I don't do math in my head that well either. However, just so we're clear, BC is -4990 and then you add 7,000, and then one more, and you do get 2011! It's a miracle! With our mathematical ingenuity and historical accuracy, we're smarter than Jesus and have figured out what only the Father knows, the date and time of the Lord's return! Let's pat ourselves on the back and wait for five months.

But wait! How did they get 7,000? And what about that extra year? Well, my two favorite parts of this whole equation are the explanations of these two numbers. We get seven thousand because Peter tells us that a day is like a thousand years in his book (2 Peter 3:8). And we add the one year because there is a year zero, if you will, between 1 BC and 1 AD. So that's how we arrive at 7,001 years to be added to the first judgment day, the flood of Noah.

Time for me to take offense at their method. First, they are correct that you would have to add a year between 1 BC and 1 AD. I have no quarrel with that. My quarrel is with their interpretation of 2 Peter 3:8. This argument is used so many times I get sick of explaining the bad hermeneutics that come from such carte blanche statements. Let's practice good hermeneutics and look at the context of that statement, and then evaluate that statement itself.

Second Peter 3:8 is the beginning of a paragraph in the Greek text from verses 8 to 14. Read through that real quick (2 Peter 3:8-14). What is the point of the paragraph? Is it to tell us how to figure out the eons of time that we must wait for the Lord? The paragraph is about the Day of the Lord. But what is the point of this paragraph? Here is what I get in the context. I would state that

Peter's point in writing this specific paragraph is to assure believers that we need to live godly lives until that day arrives because it doesn't arrive in the time that we expect, but in God's time. More important for our discussion here is that we don't know when God's time is!

Look at verse 10. The Day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. Do you know when you're going to get robbed? I don't. So there's a measure of mystery and we cannot know it exactly. Is God a slow mover based on verse 9? Not like we think. You see, many years may pass before He returns, but He is not slow. We are slow. We see His patience as slowness. But it is not. It is waiting on the full number of believers to be harvested from humanity before destruction. It is grace and mercy we are viewing as slowness. Now let's go back to verse 8 where we are given specific numbers, because those will surely help us to find out the mystery, right?

In verse eight, there are a couple of elements we would notice anywhere else that people ignore here. First of all, the fact that we are to not overlook is not the specific numbers that we are introduced to, but the concept. The fact is not that one day EQUALS a thousand years, but that God's timing is not our timing. For us, time relatively passes as one day, but for the Lord, that same time could be, but is not EXACTLY, a thousand years. The second, and most important part of this whole verse is that Peter is using a simile here!

A simile is an approximation or comparison that is not based on exact and specific elements. Similes use the word "like" to approximate the comparison. Let me drive this home with an analogy to help us out. If I tell you that a tiger is like a big kitty cat, you

would not go out and buy a tiger for a house pet. If you did, and somehow conspicuously disappeared, we'd all know that you don't understand simile. A tiger is nothing like a little kitty cat. A tiger is however in the feline family of animals. But it is not a pet! I am simply making a reference point for someone who's holding a kitty cat and has never seen a tiger.

So Peter employs the literary device of a simile to help us have a reference point for why God has not completed all of His promises yet. So the best way Peter knows how to say "God's timing is not our timing because His perspective is wider and longer and deeper" is to say, "You view time in days, but God views time in millennia." There is no math to be used here. A simile is not an equation! And it should never be used as such. I do apologize for what must seem like an abrasive article, but I have seen this hermeneutical gaff so much that it sickens me to have to repeat this over and over to different people. Now I'll just point them to this article.

So we cannot think that 7,001 years is a good estimate exactly from 4990 BC to 2011. Also, the number seven is sometimes a very symbolic, not literal, number. So seven days is like a week. How do we know God won't wait two weeks instead of one? Or better yet! He likes the number three, so what if He waits three weeks! That's 21,000 years! And so on. My only caveat to this is that the rapture can take place at any moment. Could it happen when this lady believes it will? Sure. It could happen before you finish reading this sentence! It comes like a thief in the night. The best way to defend against the surprise of the rapture or the Day of the Lord is to be ready, not to know the date. What happens to all of the people following this woman around if May

21, 2011 is not that right day? This happened before, like in 1988, and it will happen again with these daters. That's why I kissed dating goodbye long ago.

However, in the same breath, I long for the return of the King! My soul aches for His return. Every morning I wake up with Maranatha on my lips. I want to go home. While some things are comforting on this earth, remnants left over of the good creation that God made, most of it is tainted and marred by sin. I would love for them to be right, but God's Word says differently! When it comes to dating, the Word is clear, and I would be very interested to see how these daters would explain these passages.

First, let us go to Jesus' words in Acts 1:6-7. Here, the disciples ask Him if He is going to restore Israel's kingdom now. Jesus answers with a statement that applies specifically to Israel's kingdom, but also the end times. You are not to know the times or seasons the Father has ordained, or fixed by His authority. We are not to know the times and seasons for all things. Setting a date goes against the words of Jesus. It seems clear to me that dating is not a Scripture supported hobby, and it also tends to distract the church from its mission, as well as destroying the imminence of Christ, the idea that He can come back at any moment. We will not know the date, but we must be ready and we will not be surprised.

Finally, the Bible does not leave us in the dark about the Lord's return. In Matthew 24:32-35, we are given an understanding that after seeing all of the precursors to the Lord's return, we should get ready because we know the season is coming for His return. So we can discern the seasons where He is more likely to return, but we can't call out dates. Let us be more concerned with

being ready for our Lord's return than when He will return. Even so, Lord, come now!