



Are We There Yet? – Apocalyptic Christians Are Boring

By: Harry Cheadle – August 9, 2013

Are We There Yet? is a feature in which I break down the current issue of *Endtime* magazine, the bimonthly print publication of *Endtime Ministries*. As you might have guessed, *Endtime's* purpose is to advance the notion that the end of the world is nigh and that current news events were prophesized in the Bible's more apocalyptic passages. The magazine has been published for 22 years without ever questioning whether the end times are actually upon us, which is impressive in a way. I'll be writing this column every other month or so until the sounding of the first trumpet, or until I get bored with it, whichever comes first.

When I started reading *Endtime*, I thought getting a magazine devoted to the end of the world every two months would be fascinating—I'd get loads of insane theories, wacky photoshop jobs, and far-out interpretations of news stories from the Middle East. I was right about the photoshopping (get a load of that cover!), but wrong about everything else. As I learned from previous issues of this publication, publisher/editor/company founder Irvin Baxter believes that there is a war coming that will wipe out a third of humanity; that a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine will result in animals being sacrificed on the Temple Mount for the first time in 2,000 years; that a global government, led by the Antichrist, will emerge and persecute Christians and Israel before a big, end-of-the-world fight between good and evil. These are fairly nutty things to believe, but as it turns out, hearing about them makes for pretty mind-numbing reading.

After the letters to the editor section—where Irvin answers questions such as, “Is a third of the world population *really* going to die in that big war?” (yes) and “Is there *really* going to be a river of blood five feet deep at the Battle of Armageddon?” (yes, but it won't be that deep all the way from the Plain of Megiddo to Jerusalem)—the July/August issue of *Endtime* features a long, somewhat meandering story on the Israel-Palestine peace negotiations organized by US Secretary of State John Kerry that concludes casually by saying that there will some day be peace in Israel because the Bible says so, “but probably not now. The Sixth Trumpet War that will kill one-third of the human race will probably happen first.” Oh, that clears that up then, I guess.

That's followed by a remarkably boring article that lists the various people who could be considered the President of Europe. It's mainly a rundown of the EU's bureaucracy that only ties into the publication's the-world-is-ending theme when it reminds us that “according to Bible prophecy, the European Union will one day be central to the Antichrist's global system of governmental, religious and economic control.” Then there are two pieces about the evils of the US adopting a national ID system—one, by Jim Harper of the libertarian-leaning Cato Institute, argues that if the federal government requires people to have ID cards it will soon use that system to track and monitor them; the other is much, much crazier and compares identification cards to the numbers that the Nazis tattooed on Jews in concentration camps. The magazine

dealt with the topic of ID (the “mark of the beast” which will “control buying and selling”) cards four months ago as well, so I sort of get the sense that Irvin and co. are running out of stuff to write about, though their supply of ominous graphics remains bottomless. All of these articles are heavy on dry quotes (mostly from the Bible, but also from Ron Paul) and minute historical details, and light on rivers of blood. It’s the apocalypse as foretold by a textbook.

Irvin’s specialty throughout his career as a Pentecostal minister/apocalypse scholar has been linking modern-day events to biblical prophecies. (For instance, apparently “the color of capitalism is black,” which means that the black horse in the Book of Revelation is a metaphor for capitalism.) He’s identified five of the seven trumpets that will sound before the world goes kerplunk (the fifth was the Gulf War), which, you’ll note, doesn’t leave him with many more events to predict or parse. Peace between Israel and Palestine is practically the last marker on his timeline toward Armageddon—after that, we’ve just got seven years until the world ends. The tone of most of the articles he publishes can best be described as “cautiously apocalyptic”: *Is Israel about to start sacrificing animals again? Is there a world government? Is the Pope the False Prophet? Probably not, but we’re close, I promise! Tune in next time!*

What Endtime Ministries really seems to want you to do is to buy their DVDs, which cost \$20 apiece or \$199 for the whole set of 14. Judging by video clips floating around the Endtime site, these DVDs mainly consist of Irvin sitting at a desk and speaking through his jowls about beasts and the prophecy of Daniel while dramatic music plays in the background, a static shot only occasionally broken up by hacky computer animation:

I’m going to go out on a limb and say all those hours of “prophecy lessons,” like the magazine, keep circling back to the same topics over and over again—Israel, animal sacrifices on the Temple Mount, a world government, the Mark of the Beast, etc. Turns out, when someone tries to apply an ancient, metaphorical text to contemporary news stories there are only so many things he can say. The first time you hear about multi-horned biblical beasts and animal sacrifices in modern-day Israel you’re intrigued; the tenth time your eyes glaze over.

Irvin Baxter is nuts and obsessed with the same few bits of scripture he’s been worrying over for 30 years. Unfortunately, he’s not a particularly *fun* nut. I said I’d recap *Endtime* until I got bored with it, and unfortunately, that moment has come. I’ll check back in with Irvin when the Antichrist stands in the Third Temple and announces he is God.