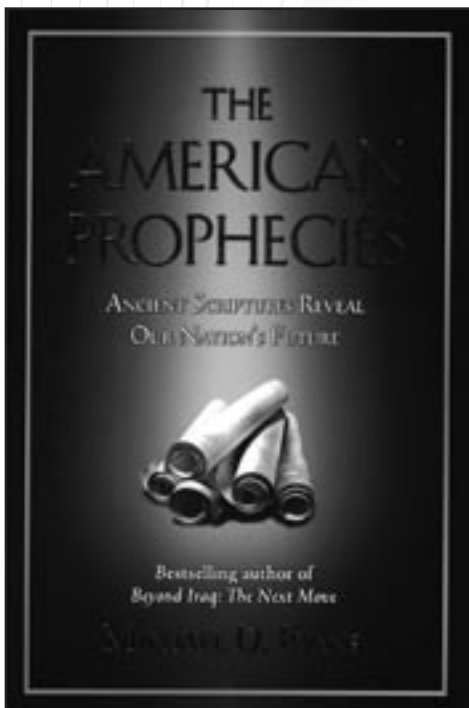


“Pop Prophecy Peddlers” A Review of Mike Evans’ *The American Prophecies*

by Gary DeMar

MIKE EVANS IS lauded as a prophecy expert, a bestselling author, “a confidant to leaders in Israel,” and an authority on Middle East affairs. I first became aware of Mr. Evans when I read his 1986 prophecy book *The Return*, which stated the following on the front cover: “The world is about to experience history’s most climatic event.” That was nearly 20 years ago. “About to” must have a meaning that I’m not aware of. His most recent book is *The American Prophecies: Ancient Scriptures Reveal Our Nation’s Future* (2004).



From what the book actually covers in terms of prophetic content, the title is misleading. It’s not that he argues his case poorly; he doesn’t argue it at all. In fact, he admits that in the past he “tended to be skeptical of attempts to come up with schemes to plug America into prophetic interpretations.” He “often referred to such teachers as ‘Pop Prophecy Peddlers.’”¹ He now claims, “after thousands of hours of research” that he is “totally convinced that America is found in prophecy. . . .”² But where? What *particular* verses does he put forth to support his contention that there are distinctly American prophecies? I couldn’t find one.

WHERE’S AMERICA IN THE BIBLE?

Some prophecy writers believe they have found the United States in Ezekiel 38:13 with the “merchants of Tarshish” being a reference to Great Britain and “the young lions” a cryptic allusion to her “former colonies, including the United States.”³ Here’s how one dispensational writer unpacks the theory:

So the young lions of Tarshish would definitely refer to the North American colonies as well as the European colonies, and hence bring the U.S. into this prophecy as one of the nations that will strongly protest the Russian invasion of Israel in the last days.⁴

Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy argue in a similar way,⁵ even though Tim LaHaye, whom they quote in their Introduction, admits that “the United States is not clearly mentioned in Bible prophecy.”⁶

Finding America in Scripture is accomplished through a series of logical inferences. Here’s an example of how it’s done: “Since America, with the liberality of its government and churches, has been the major instrument in the hands of God, fulfilling the prophecy of Matthew 24:14,⁷ it follows that the U.S.A. enjoys a most exalted position in the scheme of events that lead up to the end of this age.”⁸ In this way, America is found in Bible prophecy. Of course, with such a broad application of the Bible, anything and everything can be found in the Bible.

Evans follows an equally broad method to flesh out the claim of his book's title. He begins by quoting Genesis 12:1–3: "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse." (By the way, the "you" is singular.) There's nothing unique in the way he uses this verse. Dispensationalists have been falling back on it for decades in their unconditional support for Israel. Following dispensational logic, based on this single passage, Evans' book could have carried any of the following titles:

- *The Canadian Prophecies*
- *The Mexican Prophecies*
- *The Japanese Prophecies*
- *The Cuban Prophecies*
- *The Chinese Prophecies*
- *The Australian Prophecies*

But since America is the hot market for prophetic books, it's *The American Prophecies*.

NEW COVENANT REALITIES

Dispensationalists have maintained that any nation that does not support Israel will be relegated to the dustbin of history. Babylon and Assyria immediately come to mind as two prominent examples. The German government under Adolf Hitler killed six million Jews, but Germany is still a world superpower. It ranks third in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) behind the United States and Japan. How can this be if Israel has the same covenantal position before God that it had prior to the coming of Christ? Germany should have been wiped out as a nation. Nazism was defeated, but Germany as a nation remains. The same cannot be said for Babylon and Assyria. Evans sees judgment coming for America because America is "cursing what God has blessed (Israel) and blessing what God has cursed (rebuilding Babylon)."⁹ If this is true, then why wasn't America cursed for rebuilding Germany?

Japan, a nation that didn't do anything to the Jews during World War II, had two of its cities destroyed by atomic blasts.

These nations were defeated because they pursued world domination and practiced the worst kind of war-time atrocities. They weren't defeated because of any relationship with Israel, either bad or indifferent.

America has been blessed by God because of its Christian heritage, its moral code, and its willingness to rectify moral wrongs (e.g., slavery). America will be judged because of unrighteousness (e.g., abortion and homosexuality) not because of a broken relationship with Israel. Of course, Mr. Evans disagrees. He maintains that "America has married two brothers, both descendants of ancient Abraham"—Israel and Ishmael. It's this double mindedness, he argues, that has put America's future at risk with God:



One of these marriages was based on America's guilt over its appeasement policies, which resulted in the deaths of millions of Jews during the Holocaust. America has attempted to use a tiny democratic state in the midst of a sea of instability in the Middle East—Israel—to assist, in deterring communism, fascism, and terrorism. The marriage to the other brother, Ishmael, was one of convenience. A mortal enemy of the younger brother, Ishmael brought a dowry of black gold (oil) to the marriage, and then used it to blackmail America.¹⁰



THE NEW TESTAMENT'S COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLICAL STORY DOES NOT SUPPORT EVANS' SPECIAL ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION (GAL. 4:22-31)

There are numerous problems in the Middle East, and oil is certainly a contributing factor. But to maintain that the Bible predicted any of this specifically for America is reading into Scripture an interpretive system that is not there.

Let me say that a person can be a Middle East authority without interpreting current events through the lens of dispensational premillennialism. If Mr. Evans has any expertise in the area of

Middle East affairs, it comes from studying the region and the expert opinion of others. There are many people who understand the Middle East as well as Mr. Evans does who have no training in Bible prophecy. How do I know this? Because Mr. Evans quotes them and acknowledges their expertise! It's not that difficult to figure out where America has gone wrong in dealing with these Muslim nations. The world's troubles with Islam is centuries old. And it doesn't take an expert to realize that America is on the path of moral degradation and possible judgment based on a number moral considerations. Abortion and homosexuality immediately come to mind.

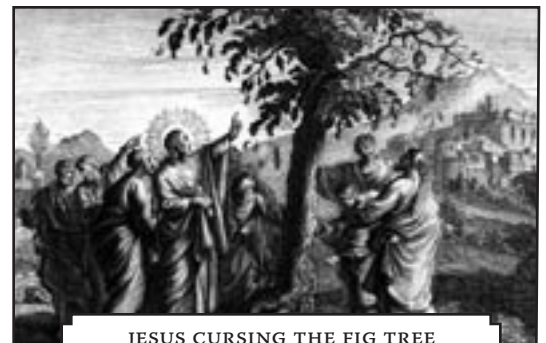
Given dispensational presuppositions, however, there is no way to fix any international problem. If we promote peace, it's the movement of the coming antichrist. If there's war, then we're told that the Bible predicts that "there will be wars and rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6). For Evans and other pop prophecy writers, "this is the midnight hour. . . . I'm telling you the truth," Evans writes. "Jesus is coming back, and He's coming back soon!"¹¹ If He's coming back soon, why bother!

As I've pointed out in a yet-to-be published book, for the last 100 years Russia

was the end-time bad guy. It's only been in the last 20 years that the focus has shifted to Muslim extremism because historical events have changed. As a result, the prophecy writers have had to retool. This brings me back to *The Return*. In this 1986 book, Evans put his prophetic analytical skills to work. He concluded that there is "instability" in the Middle East, "such as represented by the war between Iran and Iraq." This conflict "will tempt the Soviets to intervene."¹² Of course, we know that the Soviets did not intervene. In fact, the Soviet Union no longer exists! The fall of the Soviet Union was not predicted by Mr. Evans. On the contrary, he devotes an entire chapter to "Red Hot Russia" based on a futurized reading of Ezekiel 38 and 39.¹³ A peek behind the iron curtain has shown us that the former Soviet Union was a paper tiger. Russia was pushed out of Afghanistan by the Taliban. Russia's battle is with Islamic extremists.

GENERATIONAL DATE SETTING

Like Hal Lindsey, Mr. Evans set a tentative date for Jesus' return. He argued in *The Return* that the "this generation" of Matthew 24:34 "is the generation of people who see the fig tree putting forth leaves from tender branches."¹⁴ The "fig tree" of Matthew 24:32 "stands for restored Israel."¹⁵ I find it odd, if the fig tree is the symbol for a restored Israel, that earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus curses the fig tree so that "no longer shall there ever be any fruit from you" (21:19). It's quite clear that the Bible uses the olive tree as a symbol for Israel (Rom. 11:17).



JESUS CURSING THE FIG TREE

Evans then traps himself by identifying the final generation before Jesus returns:

Here, then, is how I interpret Jesus' remarks about the fig tree and "this generation." The generation of people who see the blossoming of the fig tree (Israel's rebirth and establishment in the family of nations)¹⁶ is the generation that will see the completion of "all these things" (the signs of the end recorded in Matthew 24). The generation of people that saw the blossoming were born between 1925 and 1935. Their lifespan will be roughly seventy years according to the Bible and the actuarial charts. Some of them will live much longer, but the Lord will have returned before their generation passes away, I believe.¹⁷

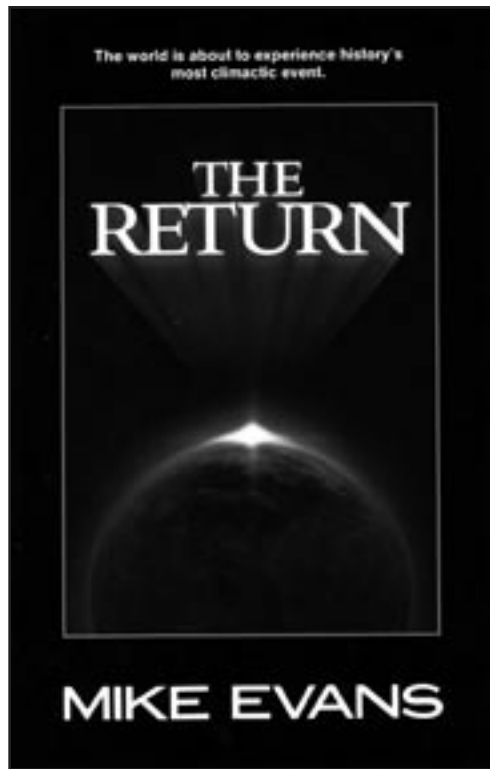
There you have it, a way to put Mike Evans' interpretive analysis to the test. If we begin with 1925 and add 70 years, we get 1995, with the "rapture" taking place seven years before (1988). If we begin with 1935 and add 70 years, we get 2005, with the rapture taking place in 1998. The conclusion? Mike Evans was wrong.

A PROPHETIC MINE FIELD

It's difficult to go against books like *The American Prophecies* and the dispensational worldview in general since so many big-name Christian leaders blindly support arguments like those of Evans. It's the 1000-pound gorilla of Christian publishing. Even

secular publishers want a piece of the action, even though they don't believe a word of what they publish from guys like Evans. Time Warner Book Group now has a subsidiary label called "Warner Faith."

Being critical of anyone who supports Israel is also risky. Immediately you are labeled "anti-semitic" or "not a friend of Israel." Not viewing the Bible dispensationally does not make someone an anti-semitic. Maintaining that Mr. Evans, Tim LaHaye, and Hal Lindsey are interpreting the Bible incorrectly does not mean that a person is a holocaust denier, a believer in the authenticity of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, or a supporter of Syrian Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas's 1983 book, *The Matza of Zion*.¹⁸ Neither does it mean that Israel does not have a legitimate right to her land or the right to defend her nation against her enemies. Our support for Israel should be based on what's morally right for everyone not what's prophetically proposed.



CONCLUSION

The issue is whether America, or any nation for that matter, should be held captive to a peculiar interpretation of the Bible that claims that modern-day Israel is the center of history. Mr. Evans asserts that every decision a president makes must be made with Israel in mind. The Bible does not teach this. There is not a word of this in the NT. The center of the Bible is Jesus Christ, not the nation of Israel. Abraham rejoiced to

see Jesus' day; "and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). On the road to Emmaus with His disciples, "beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, [Jesus] explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). Israel will be

judged like every other nation, no better or no worse. The same standard applies to everyone. "Repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (24:47).

Notes

1. Michael D. Evans, *The American Prophecies: Ancient Scriptures Reveal Our Nation's Future* (New York: Warner Faith, 2004), 5.
2. Evans, *The American Prophecies*, 5.
3. Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 108.
4. David Allen Lewis, *Prophecy 2000* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 1990), 103.
5. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *The Truth About the Last Days* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998). The authors assert that "even America, which currently is a strong supporter of Israel, will be involved" (11) in the all-out attack on Israel described in Zechariah 12:2-3. This seems to contradict the view espoused by David Allen Lewis above. It's my view that Zechariah 12 is describing events in Zechariah's day, specifically, the failed attempt of Haman to destroy the Jews. "All the nations of the earth" (Zech. 12:2) is used frequently in the Bible (e.g., 1 Chron. 4:17; Jer. 28:11; Ps. 118:10; Acts 2:5), and, as these examples show, the phrase is not a reference to every nation on the planet either then or now.
6. Tim LaHaye, "Is the United States in Bible Prophecy," *National Liberty Journal* (February 1997), 16. Quoted in Ice and Demy, *The Truth About America in the Last Days*, 7.
7. As I've pointed out, the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14 took place before "this generation" passed away, that is, the generation of Jesus' day. See Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church*, 4th ed. (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision, 1999), 87-89.
8. Lewis, *Prophecy 2000*, 106.
9. Evans, *The American Prophecies*, 243.
10. Evans, *The American Prophecies*, 5.
11. Evans, *The American Prophecies*, 250.
12. Mike Evans, *The Return* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 67.
13. See Gary DeMar, *End Times Fiction: A Biblical Consideration of the Left Behind Theology* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), chap. 1 and "The Fiction Behind Left Behind," *Biblical Worldview* (July 2004), 3, 12-17.
14. Evans, *The Return*, 182.
15. Evans, *The Return*, 182.
16. Evans is interpreting what he believes Matthew 24:32 is saying. There is no mention of Israel or nationhood. Jesus does not say one thing about the reestablishment of Israel in the Olivet Discourse or anywhere else in the Gospels. Even the phrase "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26) is not as all inclusive or optimistic as dispensationalists maintain. "All Israel" actually means "all that's left of Israel after 2/3 of the Jews are killed during the Great Tribulation" (Zech. 13:8). This is why the tenth volume in LaHaye's *Left Behind* series is titled *The Remnant*, that is, the remnant of the Jews.
17. Evans, *The Return*, 182-183.
18. Accuses Jews of baking Passover matza with the blood of Muslim children.

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