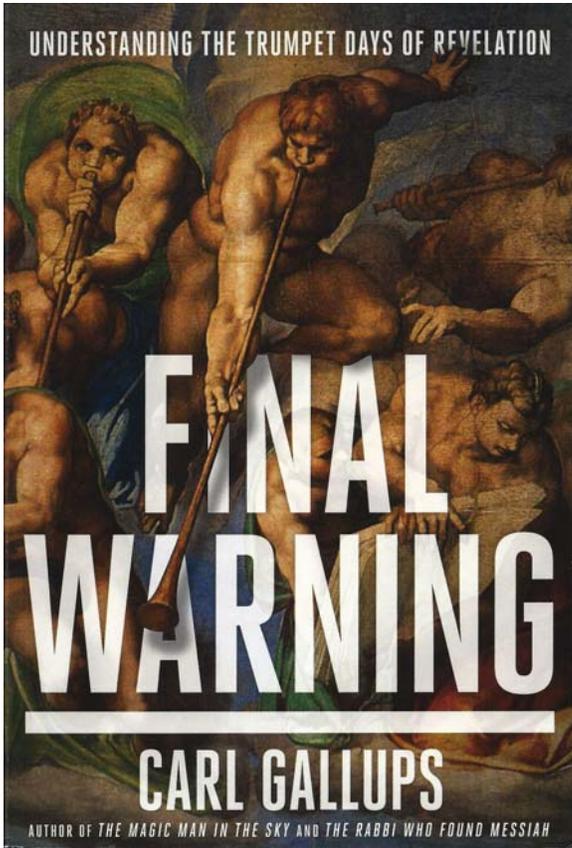


Book Review

A Confused Book About Revelation

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This is a book review that I did not want to write. The reason is simple. Carl Gallups, the author, is a dear and valued friend, and I must honestly report that his latest book is a disaster.

I first became aware of Carl in 2012 when his first book was published. It was titled, *The Magic Man in the Sky*, which is the term Atheists often use to refer to the Christian concept of God. The book presented a brilliant defense of the existence of God and a scathing refutation of the fantasy of Evolution.

As soon as I finished reading the book, I immediately contacted Carl and invited him to appear on our television program, which he did. I discovered that he had been a police detective for 20 years before deciding to enter ministry full time. He became the pastor of a Baptist church in Milton, Florida, located in the panhandle of the state, near Destin. He has served that church since 1987.

Before writing his first book, Carl had become known nationally through his radio program and his Internet video programs that focus on providing a biblical perspective on national and international events. He had developed a reputation as an articulate, outspoken and fearless prophetic voice due to his insightful commentaries about the decay of American society and our impending destruction by God.

His first book established him as a serious apologetics author who understands how to defend God's Word. The book is "must reading" for any Christian.

Carl's Second Book

His second book was equally good, but very different. It was titled, *The Rabbi Who Found Messiah*. It is an investigative journalistic type of book that exposed to the world the remarkable story of one of Israel's most influential rabbis — Yitzhak Kaduri.

Before the rabbi died in January of 2006, he announced to his followers that the Messiah had appeared to him and revealed His identity. He said he had written down the Messiah's name on a piece of paper and sealed it in an envelope that was to be opened one year after his death. That was done in January of 2007, and the name the envelope contained produced a profound shock among Orthodox Jews. It was Yeshua, the Hebrew name for Jesus! This revelation was dismissed as "dementia" and was quickly covered up by both the Orthodox and the Israeli press.

Carl's excellent book brought the revelation back to light, and the book is being used very effectively in Israel today to witness Jesus to Orthodox Jews, some of whom have accepted Yeshua as their Lord and Savior.

Carl's Newest Book

This brings us to Carl's third book, just recently published. It is titled, *Final Warning: Understanding the Trumpet Days of Revelation* (WND Books, 2015, 234 pages). The book carries an endorsement by Joel Richardson, the proponent of the very unbiblical idea that the Antichrist is going to be a Muslim. He states: "If you have a passion to study the subject of the end times, then you will love this book! Gallups is an engaging writer who presents a unique perspective. Prepare to be challenged."

It is true that Carl is an “engaging writer, but it is not true that he presents “a unique perspective.” It is an unusual perspective, and from my viewpoint, it is completely off-the-wall, but it is not unique. That’s because it is an echo of the concepts of a very well known Bible prophecy teacher by the name of Irvin Baxter.

Basically, both of these men believe that we are currently living in the midst of the Trumpet Judgments of the book of Revelation! That’s right. They do not see these judgments as something future that will occur during the Tribulation. No, they claim the judgments are happening now.

A Lonely Interpretation

Until the publication of Carl’s book, I was not aware of anyone who agreed with Baxter’s interpretation of Revelation. In fact, Baxter has no links to any other prophecy ministries on his website because no one else agrees with him — until now.

Lone Ranger interpretations of this nature should always be suspect because the Bible specifically states that “no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation’ (2 Peter 1:20). Here’s how Southern Baptist theologian Frank Stagg put it in his essay, “How to Understand the Bible” (1974): “God does not grant private disclosures that are withheld from other people.”

When you think about how unusual the interpretation of Revelation is that these men have come up with, you can understand why I consider it remarkable that throughout Carl’s new book, he repeatedly introduces each of his strange interpretations by proclaiming that “many” or “numerous” prophecy scholars agree with him!

The Third Trumpet

Carl begins his book by focusing on the third Trumpet Judgment because he says this was the first one that he realized had already been fulfilled in our day and time (chapter 15). It is the judgment recorded in Revelation 8:10-11. It reads as follows:

10) The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters.

11) The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

Carl argues that this prophecy was fulfilled in the explosion of the Russian nuclear reactor in Chernobyl, Ukraine on April 26, 1986 (chapter 15). His basic reason for making the connection between this event and the prophecy is the fact that Chernobyl means wormwood in the Ukrainian language (chapter 16).

To make the rest of the prophecy fit the event, Carl engages in some fanciful spiritualizations of Scripture. He explains away the reference to a star falling from heaven as a First Century man’s primitive explanation of a nuclear explosion (chapter 18).

To do this, Carl starts redefining words, a technique he uses throughout his book. So, according to Carl, the word, star, doesn’t really mean star — it is just something that looked like a star (pp. 124ff). And heaven doesn’t really mean heaven, it is just a reference to the sky. Also, the idea that a star falls from heaven is just a reference to debris from a nuclear explosion falling back to the ground (p. 126).

Further, Carl asserts that the statement that this event will result in one-third of the waters of the world being polluted must be interpreted as meaning simply “a calamity on a monumental scale” (pp. 116ff). That’s a very convenient interpretation, but it is not what the prophecy says.

Now, having come to the conclusion that the Chernobyl explosion was a fulfillment of the third Trumpet Judgment, Carl concludes that the first and second Trumpet Judgments must also have already occurred and must have done so before 1986.

The Second Trumpet

The second Trumpet Judgment, found in Revelation 8:8-9, reads as follows:

8) The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood,

9) and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

To give a contemporary interpretation to this prophecy, the first thing Carl does is to explain away the reference to the sea by saying, “Obviously, the sea in these verses is not a literal ocean of water but rather a vast expanse” (p. 129). “Obviously”? Really? Obvious to whom?

He then resorts to the redefinition of words, claiming that “thrown” should really be translated “arise” (p. 131).

Now, having changed the meaning of the prophecy, he proceeds to proclaim that it was fulfilled in 1945 with the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since Japan is a island nation, from a distance, the explosions must have looked like “a mountain of fire” rising from the sea (p. 131).

And, oh yes, the reference to one-third of the sea being affected is also explained away in a most peculiar way. It refers to either one-third of the population of Japan being killed in the explosions (including those who died over a five year period of time from radiation poisoning), or it refers to one-third of those involved in World War II being killed (pp. 132-133). But these particular verses do not speak of one-third of any group being killed. They talk about one-third of the sea becoming blood. And Carl never bothers to explain away the reference to the sea turning to blood.

The First Trumpet

This brings us to the first Trumpet Judgment. It is recorded in Revelation 8, verse 7:

The first [trumpet] sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Carl proposes two possible modern day fulfillments of this prophecy. The first would be the “scorched earth” policy followed by the Russians in the defeat of the Nazi invasion of their nation during World War II (pp. 136ff). The second alternative, and the one Carl prefers, is that this verse is describing World War I (pp. 138ff).

Carl explains away the prophecy’s statement that the judgment will affect one-third of the earth by, once again, redefining words. The problem, he says, is that we are “relying solely upon the English translation” (p. 136). He then explains: “In actuality, the Greek word for earth in this passage allows for something much more local in nature.” So, as Carl puts it, the Apostle John, who wrote Revelation, “could easily have been speaking of a specific theater — that is, a specific region” (p. 136). Again, very convenient for Carl, but that is not what the text says.

The Fourth Trumpet

At this point in his book, Carl jumps to the fourth Trumpet Judgment in Revelation 8:12 which reads as follows:

The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

In his desperation to find a modern day fulfillment for this prophecy, Carl resorts to a 2004 article in the *New York Times* which reported that due to pollution, there was drop in the amount of sunshine reaching the earth by as much as 10 percent from the late 1950s to the early 1990s — or about 2 percent per decade (p. 141).

Carl calls this “global dimming,” and he jumps on the fact that in one place, Hong Kong, the loss of daylight amounted to 37 percent. Well, the prophecy does not speak of one place — it speaks of the impact on the whole world, and it also speaks of an immediate impact, not a gradual one over 40 years.

The Fifth Trumpet

The fifth Trumpet Judgment is a long one recorded in Revelation 9:1-11. To summarize it, the prophecy says that “a star from heaven” [identified as an angel] falls to earth with “the key to the abyss” [some translations read

“bottomless pit”]. This is a reference to the place where rebellious angels are held (2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6). The angel opens the abyss and smoke comes out, together with a swarm of demons shaped like locusts who can sting like scorpions. They are allowed to torment all mankind for 5 months, except for those who have “the seal of God on their foreheads.” The locusts have a “king over them” who is described as an “angel of the abyss” whose name in Hebrew is *Abaddon* and in Greek is *Apollyon* — both names meaning, “Destroyer.”

Incredibly, Carl tries to find the fulfillment of this prophecy in the Gulf War of 1990-1991 (chapter 22). The five months of torment is interpreted to refer to the five months that Iraq tormented the people of Kuwait before the United States launched its invasion. The abyss is redefined to mean a hole in the ground like a pit or a well, and thus Carl says the prophecy is really talking about the oil wells of Iraq! The smoke from the abyss is the burning of the oil wells. The locusts are helicopters. And the king called *Abaddon* or *Apollyon* is Saddam Hussein because his nick-name was “Destroyer.”

This whole interpretation was just beyond belief to me because the prophecy makes it clear that it is talking about a demonic invasion. And the idea that Saddam Hussein might be the Destroyer spoken about in the prophecy was particularly mystifying because the prophecy clearly states that the Destroyer is a demon who is released from the abyss.

The Sixth Trumpet

That brings us to the sixth Trumpet Judgment, and mercifully, Carl does not try to explain it away by linking it to some modern day event. Rather, he says its fulfillment is yet future (chapter 21). This is the judgment that says armies consisting of 200 million soldiers will be released who will proceed to kill “a third of mankind” (Revelation 9:13-19).

In speculating how this prophecy might be fulfilled, Carl states, “I am certainly not going to insist upon a rigorous interpretation of this sixth trumpet prophecy” (p. 169). Really? Why not?

He then proceeds to explain away the prophecy’s meaning by stating that it is most likely going to be fulfilled by a limited war in the Middle East in which one-third of the participants will be killed.

Unusual Interpretations

There are many other strange interpretations contained in Carl’s book. For example:

- The Seal Judgments (which precede the Trumpet Judgments) are not really judgments. They are just a general overview of what is going to happen — they are warnings, like those contained in Jesus’ Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. The actual judgments do not start happening until the Trumpet Judgments which are all contained in the seventh Seal Judgment (pp. 77-79).
- The Two Witnesses (Revelation 11) who will prophesy in Jerusalem for three and a half years and then be killed by the Antichrist are identified as symbols of Messianic Jews and the Church (even though Messianic Jews are part of the Church). In other words, Carl denies the witnesses will be two men (chapter 13).
- The Rapture of the Church will take place when the Two Witnesses (all Jewish and Gentile believers) are caught up to Heaven (Revelation 11:11-12). This will happen before the pouring out of God’s wrath in the Bowl Judgments (Revelation 16). So, the Rapture will most likely take place in the middle of the Tribulation, following the blowing of the seventh trumpet in the series of Trumpet Judgments (chapter 29).
- The “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15) which will be erected “in the holy place” is the current Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount (chapter 27) — despite the fact that the Bible clearly states that this abomination will be erected by the Antichrist.

The Basic Problem

There is a fundamental problem with Carl’s analysis that he never addresses, and it is the death knell to all that he proclaims. It is the fact that *the book of Revelation pictures all its series of judgments — Seals, Trumpets and Bowls — as occurring within a 7 year period of time*. This time period is precisely defined as 2,520 days (Revelation 11:3 and 12:6), or 7 years when considering that a prophetic year is 360 days.

The prophet Daniel says this 7 year period of time will begin when the Antichrist makes a treaty with Israel — most likely one that will allow the Jews to rebuild their temple (Daniel 9:27).

These 7 years are the final week of years of Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks of years (Daniel 9:24). This period of 490 years is the time during which God will accomplish all His purposes among the Jewish people (Daniel 9:24).

The first 483 years of this prophecy ended with the Crucifixion, at which time the Church was established and the Jews were set aside under discipline. We are now in the Church Age which represents a gap in Daniel's prophecy. When the Church is taken out in the Rapture, God will once again focus on Israel as the centerpiece of His purposes. He will use the last 7 years of Daniel's prophecy to bring the Jews to the end of themselves through the Tribulation judgments, at the end of which, the Jewish remnant will repent and receive Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10).

Conclusion

The Tribulation judgments — all of them — are pictured in the book of Revelation as occurring within Daniel's 70th Week — a 7 year period of time. They do not begin before that time.

The judgments portrayed by the book of Revelation are all future. They will take place during the 7 years of the Tribulation. And they will happen as they are described. No one will have to redefine them or spiritualize them or explain them away. They mean what they say!

In conclusion, Carl's latest book is an exercise in imagination that is going to confuse many people. Even worse, it is going to convince many that Bible prophecy does not mean what it says.