

Sep 16, 2017 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/september/end-times-fake-news.html>

No, the World Won't End Next Week and There's No Such Thing as a Christian Numerologist

If we start speaking up about bad "Christian" reporting, maybe people will do it less. | Ed Stetzer

Again, we must deal with fake news. I've written on this numerous times before [here](#) and [here](#) and, undoubtedly, this won't be the last time.

In this case, it's making Christians look silly.

Again.

But there it is on the front page of Fox News, "[Christian doomsdayers claim world will end next week.](#)"

It's under the heading "Science." When you click on it, the article headline proclaims, "Biblical prophecy claims the world will end on Sept. 23, Christian numerologists claim."

No, the world won't end on September 23rd and, Fox News, believe it or not, there is no such thing as a 'Christian numerologist.' (And, who are the *other* Christian numerologists in the headline, beyond the one quoted?)

Every time end-of-the-world predictions resurface in the media, it is important that we ask ourselves, "Is this helpful? Is peddling these falsehoods a good way to contribute to meaningful, helpful discussions about the end times?"

Of course, the answer to this is no, they most definitely do not.

Every time.

To be fair, all it takes is a quick Google search to see that Fox News isn't the only media outlet making these unfounded claims. Fake news—fed to an often unsuspecting public by a careless media—is alive and well in our world today. Stories like these are an embarrassment to Christians and the faith convictions we take so seriously. Moreover, they are a distortion of God's word and deserve to be exposed for the fabrications that they are.

So, I let it be until it started showing up on my social media feeds (citing the Fox News article).

So let's take a look and see just how fake this news really is:

First, there is no such thing as a legitimate 'Christian numerologist.'

Sure, the writers of Scripture do, indeed, use numbers to point to a few things—that’s first-year seminary. But it stops at first-year seminary because there are not secret numerical codes that require a profession called “Christian numerology.”

Seminaries don’t offer this as a formal degree nor do any professional, accredited institutions. David Meade, the man the Fox News article cites as their source for these claims, doesn’t have any formal, academic training in numerology.

That’s right, multiple news outlets are referencing the findings of a man with, according to his website, nothing more than a bachelor’s degree in Economics and Astrology from an unnamed institution.

Furthermore, Meade doesn’t provide us with evidence of any biblical training he has received in order to speak authoritatively about the end times. He is discussing biblical matters of profound significance and making predictions about events of global importance without any real authority on these topics.

To make matters worse, the planetary alignments that Meade is using to support his claims about the end of the world have, according to an Express article, already happened four times in the past 1000 years.

Meade is a made-up leader in a made-up field, and should not be on the front page of anything, let alone Fox News.

And when we remind people of this, maybe they will be less likely to report on it next time.

If we start speaking up about bad "Christian" reporting, maybe people will do it less.

But, before getting carried away, it is important for all of us to look in the mirror for a moment and consider the role we play in the making of this mess. After all, ‘we the people’ bear partial responsibility for allowing Meade and others like him to perpetuate these tall tales.

Until we start calling out these individuals and vocalizing our rejection of their stories, the public will never be empowered to open their eyes and see the truth.

So, I’m doing my part.

Second, while it is true that numbers do have significance in the biblical narrative, making these kinds of broad sweeping predictions about the end of the world simply doesn’t makes sense.

Whenever someone tells you they have found a secret number code in the Bible, end the conversation. Everything else he or she says can be discounted.

But are there numbers in the Bible? Yep. And they don’t require a numerologist.

For starters, we see many examples of the number one denoting the singleness of the Creator as a unified being: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” The number three is used to signify perfection in the Trinity as well as completion: Jesus’ ministry on earth lasted three years and his resurrection occurred three days after his death. The number seven—likely the most well-known of biblical numbers—is also used to show divine perfection and completeness. This can be seen in God’s creation of the world in six days and decision to Sabbath on the seventh as well as numerous Old Testament rituals and celebrations.

Despite God’s clear use of these numbers in Scripture as a means to communicate with his people, they aren’t to be put to inappropriate use. Making wild claims and trying to predict the end of the world using numbers and planetary motions as Meade and others have done is the perfect example of what not to do.

In other words, there is not a legitimate field called Christian numerology.

Furthermore, the Bible is clear in Matthew 24:36 that Jesus is going to return as he promised, but no one except God the Father knows when; therefore, trying to use our finite, earthly means to speculate is, quite frankly, a waste of time.

Finally, as Christians we need to do a better job of promoting a culture of discernment in our churches and communities.

It’s simply fake news that a lot of Christians believe the world will end on September 23. Yet, it is still a reminder that we need to think critically about all news.

We can’t just believe everything we hear the media shouting in our ears; instead, we must think both carefully and critically about what we read at news sites, watch on the news, and hear our peers discussing. We need to consider our sources and, when situations like this arise, be careful to seek out answers from people who actually know what they’re talking about.

Contrary to popular beliefs, these practices don’t necessitate our becoming grumpy skeptics who assume that everyone in the world is out to get us. Matthew 10:16 does tell us to be shrewd as snakes, but it also tells us to be innocent as doves. It is possible to practice the virtues of empathy and understanding while also being diligent to carefully filter the beliefs and ideas being presented to us.

Ultimately, the notion that so many around us are being duped by pretenders like Meade should break our hearts and stir in us a passion for the spreading of truth in our communities. As believers, we can be certain that the fight against fake news has clear connections to our calling.

Jesus, truth embodied, came to earth because he wanted to set his people—indeed, all people—free. He wanted to set them free from lies about who they were, their worth, their value, and, most importantly, their sin. God is a God who loves truth because he is ultimately a God who loves freedom.

In working to promote the dispersion of that which is true in the public square, we are ultimately living out Jesus' promise to believers in John 8:32: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

UPDATE:

The Washington Post called my cell on the way to The Moody Church Sunday morning. You can read [their article](#) "The world as we know it is about to end — again — if you believe this biblical doomsday claim" in the Acts of Faith section.

"There's no such thing as a Christian numerologist. You basically got a made-up expert in a made-up field talking about a made-up event.... It sort of justifies that there's a special secret number codes in the Bible that nobody believes."

"We do believe some odd things. That Jesus is coming back, that he will set things right in the world, and no one knows the day or the hour."

Ed Stetzer holds the Billy Graham Distinguished Chair of Church, Mission, and Evangelism at Wheaton College, is Executive Director of the [Billy Graham Center](#), and publishes church leadership resources through [Mission Group](#).