

BOOK REVIEW

**Triumphing at the Gates of Stars in Their Seasons:
Waging and Winning Wars with the Twelve Constellations
Based on the Jewish and Gregorian Calendars**
by Steve Ogan (Author House, 2012; 256 pages)

The long, complex title of this book could be abbreviated simply to *Star Wars*. Perhaps one reason such a title wasn't chosen was because *that* is the name of a series of science-fiction movies. Yet what Steve Ogan proposes is fiction, not fact. He is simply making things up.

Ogan makes many bold, wide-ranging claims in this book—and many errors. *Triumphing at the Gates of Stars* illustrates the vital importance of sound biblical teaching by giving us a tragic example of the opposite.

First and foremost, it contains serious errors of hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) and doctrine. While Ogan attempts to impress readers with what seems to be deep spiritual truth, instead he confuses and mystifies them with prose that's very hard to comprehend. That incomprehensibility may be intended by the author to "wow" his readers with impressive-sounding (yet questionable and erroneous) teaching.

Ogan makes many confident claims that are either completely or inadequately documented. The 240-page book doesn't contain a single footnote or endnote. This is amazing, given (1) the number of speculative claims Ogan makes; (2) the front cover of the book puts the title "Dr." in front of the author's name, with the back cover asserting that Ogan has a "PhD in history"; and (3) given the fact that he makes many strange claims for which he either offers *no* proof or inadequately documents his supposed proof. In some cases where this reviewer checked sources cited by Ogan in his book, I was often unable to find the citation claimed by Ogan, or discovered it in a different place than Ogan cited within the source he was quoting. Often Ogan simply makes non-obvious assertions without providing any source at all. (The book has so many capitalization, spelling, and grammatical mistakes throughout that it's hard to believe any genuine scholar was involved.)

Here's a small sampling of the numerous claims Ogan makes in his book that are undocumented, poorly documented, or simply false:

No supporting documentation:

- "Knowledge of the ordinances of the stars is vital for unveiling the mysteries of all the months of the Jewish calendar." (p. 5)
- In a clear reference to the words of Jesus in Luke 21:24 (which Ogan mis-cites as Luke 19:43–44), Ogan states: "Notice that whoever controls the heavens and the stars rules the earth. unless [*sic*] we know the ordinances of the heavens and how to set the dominion of the stars on earth our nations will continue to be 'trodden under foot' by the forces of darkness." (pp. 136–137)
- "First things are prophetic." (p. 10)
- "Last things are prophetic." (p. 232)

Inadequate documentation:

- “In other words, Ishmael [the Arabs?] eventually shall be saved just as the Jews will also be redeemed.” (p. 81)
- “...Elizabeth’s six-month-old pregnancy of John the Baptist, which had been hidden to all because Zachariah’s wife was ashamed of carrying a pregnancy in her old age...”. (p. 159)
- Jacob’s wife, Rachel, “generally had a spirit of contention. She had a Jezebelic spirit of manipulation, domination and control.” (p. 185)

False assertions:

- “The three Hebrew Patriarchs were born in the first Jewish month of Nisan. Interestingly, they all died in the same month of Nisan.” (p. 18)

Comment: The Bible doesn’t tell us in what month(s) Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob were born, or in what month any of them died. It’s impossible for Ogan to know this, yet he presents it as an unquestionable fact at least two more times—see pp. 19 and 46.

- “Abraham was born in Nisan 1813 [BC].” (p. 18) (Again, there’s no way that Ogan can know the *year* when Abraham was born. We simply don’t have enough data—biblical or otherwise—to give a specific year for the date of Abraham’s birth; nor for some of the other Old Testament events that Ogan confidently asserts years for in his book.)
- “Rachel, the beloved second wife of Jacob...died on the way to Bethlehem on the 11th of [the Hebrew month] Marchesvan in the year 1553 BCE.” (p. 185) (Ogan can’t possibly know the day, month, or year when Rachel died, since neither the Bible nor secular sources pinpoint a specific date. Again, Ogan confidently asserts something he is completely ignorant about.)

Comment: Ogan makes other assertions in his book about specific dates when events in the Bible occurred. Some of these are questionable at best; and at worst, false.

- In a chart in the book entitled “US PRESIDENTS WHO WERE MASONS,” the 5th supposed U.S. President that Ogan lists is “David R. Atchison” (p. 156). Although, by a technicality, David R. Atchison became, *by default*, President for *one day* [!], I doubt that Ogan can name a single reputable historian who seriously considers David R. Atchison to ever have been US President. Atchison was never sworn into office, and apparently didn’t consider himself to have ever (seriously) been President!¹
- Based on Zechariah 8:19 in the passage 8:18–23 [cf. Zech. 7:1–6 ff.], Ogan states: “It is not very clear why God instituted specific fasts in these four months of the Jewish year. However, the proclamation of the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months do not in any way indicate that fasting cannot be done at any other times.” (p. 114) Similarly, Ogan later states that “The fast of the fifth month is one of the four scripturally stipulated fast [*sic*] of

¹ For the story about David R. Atchison having been “President for a day,” see the article at the U.S. Senate website, written by the Senate Historical Office: “David Rice Atchison: (Not) President for a Day,” [U.S. Senate: David Rice Atchison: \(Not\) President for a Day](#), dated November 13, 2020. Accessed March 1, 2022.

the Bible.” (p. 135) Believing in this supposed directive by God, Ogan asserts: “There can be no better time to fast and pray than in the fifth [Hebrew] month of Ay, when the Decans [i.e., a subset of stars] of Leo are being activated by occultists to ensure the destruction of the Jewish nation.” (p. 137)

*Comment: However, it’s a biblical fact that the **only** fast that God ordained for the Jewish nation was the Day of Atonement, which is the 10th day of the 7th Jewish month of Tishri (see Lev. 23:26–32). The other fasts in Zechariah 7 and 8 were fasts that the people themselves decided to observe, with no biblical command.*

In line with other sources commenting on Zechariah 8:9, a study note on this verse in *The Reformation Study Bible* explains:

This verse relates to the question in [Zechariah] 7:3 and its reply. The fasts mentioned commemorate various aspects of Jerusalem’s destruction. **fourth.** The fast commemorating the fall of the walls of Jerusalem, the beginning of the end for the city (2 Kin. 25: 3, 4)....**fifth.** This marks the date of the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kin. 25:8). **seventh.** This marks the date of Gedaliah’s death (2 Kin. 25:25). **tenth.** Nebuchadnezzar began his siege of Jerusalem in the tenth month (2 Kin. 25:1; Jer. 39:1–10)....²

Next,

- “No one can appreciate the incarnation of Jesus and His role in history without an understanding of the constellation of stars called Virgo which appear in August and September every year.” (p. 142) (This is both blatantly false and ridiculous.)

Comment: Ogan makes a number of other factual mistakes in his book, along with so many questionable and/or false biblical interpretations (i.e., hermeneutical errors) that space does not allow us to examine them all.

Ogan’s Bible numerics

“Bible numerics” refers to the way numbers are used in the Bible. Although numbers in the Bible are, arguably, meant to be taken literally, authors like Ogan and E.W. Bullinger³ believe that numbers in the Bible also have a symbolic or even mystical meaning. The subtitle of Bullinger’s book, *Number in Scripture (Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance)* points to this alleged significance of numbers in the Bible.

Ogan clearly believes that numbers in the Bible have symbolic meanings, which repeatedly states.⁴ Because he discusses 12 constellations in his book, Ogan states his beliefs about the symbolic significance of most of the numbers from 1 to 12; however, for unknown reasons he seems to omit specific discussion of the symbolism of the number 6. Additionally, his discussion of the symbolism of the number 1 is included in his discussion of the symbolism of the number 2.⁵ Sometimes he seems to

² *The Reformation Study Bible* (English Standard Version), p. 1637, from the study note on Zechariah 8:19, boldfaced emphasis in the original.

³ E.W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*. Alacrity Press, 2014, originally published in 1894. (The copyright page of this Alacrity Press edition erroneously cites 1921 as the original year of publication; it’s possible that 1921 *might* have been the year of a later revision of the original 1894 edition, which had at least two subsequent revisions.)

⁴ E.g., Steve Ogan, *Triumphing at the Gates of Stars*, pp. 26, 46, 73, 99, 121, 168–169, 180–181, 187, 195, 211, 221, 229.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

be deriving his beliefs about the symbolic meaning of a specific number from Bullinger's *Number in Scripture*.⁶

It *does* appear that biblical numbers (such as 7, 10, 12, and 40) sometimes have significance besides their literal meaning. For example, it may be significant that God chose 12 as the number of tribes for Israel, Christ chose 12 apostles, etc. And, as will be noted in the quotation below, most would probably agree that 7 signifies completeness or perfection, given that God created the world in 6 days and rested on the seventh. Old Testament scholar John Jefferson Davis, who has written a book on Bible numerics,⁷ has *elsewhere* noted this symbolic use of numbers in the Bible, noting out some possible pitfalls:

It is quite clear that some numbers are used symbolically in the Bible, notably, the number seven. *Some scholars have argued that all numbers are used symbolically and have theological values associated with them.* For example, one is supposed to stand for “unity”; two, “division” or “separation,” etc. *However, one encounters a serious problem at this point, for with every writer there are major differences of opinion as to the theological intention of the numbers. This is the case because **the Bible nowhere ascribes theological values to any number....***

It is strange indeed that not one [New Testament] writer ever pointed back to the theological significance of a symbolic number occurring in the OT. Many other symbols are cited by NT writers and are interpreted. It appears, therefore, that while the Bible uses numbers schematically and symbolically to convey general ideas, such as “completeness,” “few,” “many,” etc. it never ascribes mystical or theological concepts to numbers.”⁸

At least two issues deserve mention regarding this alleged significance of the numbers used in the Bible: First, it is an assumption; granted, as noted above, *some* numbers in the Bible, may contain symbolic significance—at least, sometimes. However, this need not necessarily mean that these numbers in the Bible *always* have symbolic significance *whenever* they are used in Scripture. Another reason for exercising great caution in assigning symbolic significance to numbers, as used in the Bible, is what Davis mentioned above: There is no universal agreement among those who believe that numbers in the Bible have symbolic significance. Thus, it becomes a very subjective issue: What happens if my interpretation of the way a number is used in the Bible conflicts, or is at odds, with what someone else believes the symbolic significance of the number is? Thus, it seems the better part of wisdom, for the most part, to *primarily* simply stick with the literal meaning of numbers used in the Bible, unless it is clear that the number is also being used symbolically in some way.

Additionally, as Davis mentioned above, the NT writers do not attempt to give a symbolic or theological interpretation of numbers used in the OT; even though they do interpret other events, etc., in the OT that have a meaning in addition to their literal sense (e.g., circumcision in Romans 2:25–29; Israel’s wilderness wanderings in 1 Corinthians 10:1–12; Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4:21–31; Melchizedek in Hebrews 6:20–8:2). It would be foolish to concoct doctrines on the basis of Bible numerics.

⁶ Ibid, e.g., pp. 26, 46.

⁷ John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology: A Basic Study of the Use of Numbers in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1968. On the symbolic or mystical uses of numbers in the Bible, see especially pp. 125–156. See also the Oswald Thompson Allis booklet *Bible Numerics*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, n.d. Both Allis and Davis—especially Allis—are critical of Ivan Panin, one of the 19th-century exponents of mystical interpretation of numbers in the Bible.

⁸ Charles F. Pfeiffer, Howard F. Vos, John Rea (eds.), *Wycliffe Bible Dictionary*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998, p. 1215, s.v., “Number, Numerology” by John J. Davis (*italicized emphasis mine*).

As for numbers with a mystical meaning in the Bible, the same article states:

The only authentic example of a mystical number in the Bible is the number of the name of the Beast, 666 (a variant reading is 616), in Rev. 13:17–18. It is obvious that the apostle John knew it had a hidden meaning, for he wrote, “Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six” (v. 18, NASB)....⁹

Certainly reliance on any supposed system of Bible numerics that would lead Ogan to make a statement in his book such as, “Rachel’s character was disorderly. That she died on the 11th [of the Hebrew month] Marchesvan is evidence that her death was a judgment. Eleven is the number of disorder, chaos and divine judgment.” (p. 187) Not only does Ogan’s confident assertion of the date of the death of Jacob’s wife Rachel have no biblical basis whatsoever; but his assessment of Rachel’s character seems undeservedly harsh, and his conclusions about her death being a judgment—based both on a date which he cannot know, and his breathtaking application of a subjective belief about the number 11, are astounding beyond belief! He is simply making things up.

Ogan’s astrology

Much of Ogan’s thesis in his book is that some stars and the constellations proclaim the gospel message and/or biblical truth (e.g., pp. 3, 171). An early proponent of a related theory was British cleric E.W. Bullinger, author of *The Witness of the Stars*,¹⁰ published in 1893. In that book he acknowledged a Miss Frances Rolleston as the promoter of this teaching.¹¹ He further stated that Joseph A. Seiss of Philadelphia “endeavored to popularize her work on the other side of the Atlantic.”¹² Bullinger also mentions references to this teaching in other works.¹³

Even if the teaching might have some truth in it, it seems not to have accomplished any sort of evangelistic or evidential purpose, except perhaps for those who read about it and can grasp the theory. From a purely pragmatic point of view, the teaching appears to have little value, especially for the unbelievers to whom “the witness of the stars” is presumably meant to be a witness!

However, Ogan’s far more controversial thesis is this: **Christians who properly understand the stars’ dominion can manipulate them to do their will using commands, prayer, fasting, etc. This all depends on when these stars and constellations appear in the Hebrew calendar—and on correctly coordinating those months with the months in our modern Gregorian calendar.**

Near the beginning of his book, Ogan proclaims:

The stars are not just physical elements. They have spiritual influences that set God’s dominion on earth. The sun was created by God to rule the day and the moon and the stars were made to rule the night. (p. 4)

⁹ Ibid., although this sentence is within a bracketed paragraph within the article, that appears to have been inserted by the editor.

¹⁰ E.W. Bullinger, *The Witness of the Stars*. Pantianos Classics, originally published in 1893.

¹¹ Ibid., p. vi.

¹² Ibid. See Joseph A. Seiss, *The Gospel in the Stars*. Pantianos Classics, originally published in 1882.

¹³ Ibid.

The third sentence above appears to be Ogan's paraphrase of Gen. 1:16–18. When the Scripture speaks of the sun "ruling" the day and the moon "ruling" by night—from the way Ogan deals with these heavenly bodies in his book, he obviously understands this to be some sort of *personal* governing activity on the part of the sun, the moon, and the stars (Psalm 136:9 speaks of the moon and stars ruling by night), as opposed to the metaphorical way in which the Bible describes the way in which the sun is the light source in the sky during the day, and the moon and stars are the light sources in the sky at night. Ogan's error, upon which his book is largely built, is based on his not understanding the metaphorical language being used of the sun, the moon, and the stars, when the Bible speaks of them "ruling" the day and the night.

Ogan builds on this error with his next sentence: "They [the sun, moon, and stars] are subject to man's control and whoever understands their identities and ordinances can manipulate them to rule the nations for good or bad." (p. 4) His book is an expansion of his beliefs as stated above. In fact, in line with his understanding, Ogan declares in the final sentences of his book:

Command the heavens to be aligned to the prophetic proclamations of your month. To the heavens Moses said, '*Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak.*' [Deut. 32:1a] To the earth he said '*And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.*' [Deut. 32:1b] You too can command the heavens to declare the glory of God. You can compel the firmaments to show forth God's praise.
(p. 243, italics in original, and denote the words of the Scriptures)

Thus—using Ogan's unique methods—humans can create events on earth by coordinating their prayers with the stars' movements and positions. How do we learn to harmonize the stars' activities during those timeframes? By performing what Ogan—*not Scripture*—says are the prayers and other activities appropriate for that time of year.

Just one example: On p. 142, Ogan claims that the Virgin Mary conceived Jesus in the 6th month of the Hebrew calendar (Elul), which he identifies as August and September in our modern Gregorian calendar. By a leap of logic, he concludes that when Virgo appears in the sky it becomes time for:

"Strategic Angelic Visitation to Instruments of Redemption"¹⁴

"Supernatural Encounters of Joy and Favor with God"¹⁵

"Spirit-engineered and Heaven-activated Kingdom Conceptions"¹⁶ (whatever that means)

"Sanctification of Barren Wombs to Carry the Special Seeds of Redemption"¹⁷; and

"Solemn Journeys to Demonstrate the Fulfilment of Prophetic Scriptures"¹⁸

First, Ogan misunderstands the biblical text to be stating that "the sixth month" in Luke 1:26 refers not only to the sixth month of the pregnancy of Mary's relative, Elizabeth (which Ogan does acknowledge); but that it *also* refers to the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar, which isn't what the Scripture is referring to: This is clear by noting that Luke 1:26 simply refers to the fact, stated in Luke 1:24, that Elizabeth "kept herself in seclusion for five months." It is *this* that is referred to 2 verses later, when *that* verse states, "Now in the sixth month...". There is simply no indication that Luke intends to refer to the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar with his reference in

¹⁴ Ogan, *Triumphing at the Gates of Stars*, op. cit., p. 148.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Luke 1:26 to “the sixth month.” Rather, it’s clear that he’s simply making a time reference to how long Elizabeth had been pregnant at that point. Ogan reads into Scripture what it certainly doesn’t say. Simply consulting a good Bible commentary would have kept Ogan from this error.

Ogan’s initial misinterpretation of believing that John the Baptist was conceived in the sixth month of the Jewish calendar (Elul) causes additional errors. For example: “This means that she [Elizabeth] delivered [John the Baptist] in the 9th [Hebrew] month of Kislev.” (p. 201) Building upon this imaginary foundation, Ogan confidently proclaims:

It is amazing to realise that John the Baptist was born and released as a weapon of war at the appropriate time when the heavens were declaring the glory of the Redeemer’s triumphant Archer. He was born in the 9th month of Kislev when the stars in the constellations of Sagittarius were proclaiming the message of redemption. No wonder he truly became a fiery voice in the wilderness declaring the onset of the Kingdom of God. (p. 202)

Second, though, if Ogan’s applications (derived from his misunderstanding of the reference to “the sixth month”) strike the reader as odd, there’s a good reason: It’s an *extremely* strange way of interpreting and applying the text (that is, if Ogan hadn’t first misunderstood what “the sixth month” in Luke 1:26 referred to). Further, for Ogan to try to interpret the Bible based on the months of the year when a biblical event(s) occurred, in reference to the stars; and making it sound like the stars *caused anything* to occur in biblical history is odder still—and *alien to Scripture*.

In addition to saying that stars cause or control events, Ogan haphazardly interprets Scriptures about a particular event (or events) that occurred during a particular month or period of months, as though the Scriptural record of those events give us a blueprint of what God wants us to pray for at those particular times (as indicated—**always!**—by the constellations and stars in the sky during that season of the year). We’ve partially seen how he does this with Virgo being in the sky in the Hebrew month of Elul (August and September in our modern calendar).

But Ogan does this with all 12 constellations of the zodiac at their various times of the year. He picks some particular biblical event(s) that occurred during the time of year that corresponds with the Hebrew calendar and with the stars, and draws conclusions from the passage(s) of Scripture (and sometimes with events from extrabiblical Jewish history) to instruct us on what prayer and other activities we should use to “activate” the stars during that period.

The Bible declares the folly and worthlessness of astrology (e.g., Jer. 10:1–2; Is. 47:13–15). Deuteronomy 18:9–13 condemns “one who uses divination” as “detestable”—likewise, “one who interprets omens.” Astrology seems to fit within one or both categories of things and people the Lord detests, since foretelling the future by divination is a typical feature of astrology.

Ogan stops short of using astrology for divination or foretelling the future. Although he does condemn astrology in principle (e.g., p. 4), *in actual practice* his entire book is committed to astrology’s basic premise—namely, *that the stars can influence the destinies of people and nations*.

Even though Ogan admits that astrologers and occultists use the supposed power of the stars for evil (e.g., pp. 4, 25, 26, 65–66), he still encourages God’s people to use their power for what he claims are godly purposes. Either way, *he insists that the*

stars have actual power in themselves to act for good and evil—something with no biblical, factual basis. He is simply making things up.

This isn't Christianity; it's magic! To claim that the stars can help or hinder people, businesses, nations, etc.—as Ogan clearly does—is a kind of animism (“A belief in spiritual beings thought capable of influencing human events, based on the idea that animals, plants and even inanimate objects have souls like humans”).¹⁹

In one clear example of employing astrology's basic premise, Ogan makes this bizarre interpretation of events in the Old Testament book of Esther:

Haman's sorcerers and stargazers were mobilizing the stars to fight their cause. But the watchmen and intercessors mobilized by Mordecai and Esther also enlisted the stars to fight on their behalf....All this was happening in the season when Aries, the Lamb slain and yet victorious, was declaring the glory of the triumphant King of the Jews. It was a season of contentions. Haman's stargazers were up against Esther whose name means star. Like Deborah who mobilised the stars in their courses to fight against Sisera²⁰, Esther also activated the constellations of stars called Aries to forestall Haman's stargazers.²¹

Ogan's interpretation of the story of Esther isn't just wrong; it's a disaster! He has bought into astrology's worldview, and attempts to interpret scriptural events using a concept that's totally alien to the biblical worldview.

Noted religion scholar Irving Hexham defines astrology as

The ancient belief that individual and national destinies are influenced by the stars. The role of the stars in the life of individuals is known as “natal astrology,” while “mundane astrology” deals with the fate of nations and concepts like the Age of Aquarius.²²

Ogan's book is based on “mundane astrology.” One is reminded of William Shakespeare's play *Julius Caesar*, in which Cassius declares: “The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves...”²³

Concluding observations

As stated at the beginning of this critique, Ogan appears to be attempting to “wow” readers with his supposed esoteric knowledge. Unfortunately, he mishandles Scripture, speaks boldly about things of which he is ignorant, and spreads much false and misleading information. Overall, Ogan proves himself an unreliable guide to the many matters he confidently expounds upon in his book.

¹⁹ Rosemary Goring (ed.), *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Beliefs & Religions*. Herefordshire: Wordsworth Editions, Ltd., 1995, p. 25, s.v., “animism.” Some now consider “animism” an obsolete term, which seems a shame since it seems to accurately describe a religious worldview.

²⁰ Here, Ogan refers to the events of Judges chapters 4 & 5, and specifically to Judges 5:20. He references this event and alludes to this Scripture again on p. 229. However, the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* has a helpful study note on this verse explaining that the reference in this verse to the stars fighting against Sisera was “a poetic way of saying that the powers of heaven fought in Israel's behalf.” *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, 2008 Update, from the study note on Judges 5:20, p. 338.

²¹ Ogan, *Triumphing at the Gates of Stars*, op. cit., p. 26.

²² Irving Hexham, *Pocket Dictionary of New Religious Movements*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002, p. 19, s.v., “astrology.”

²³ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*. Act 1, Scene 2, Lines 147–148.

It appears as though Ogan and those like him are trying to appeal to naïve and unstable believers who have “itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3–5) and a constant thirst for “something new” (much like the Athenians in Acts 17:21).

Indeed, Ogan labors mightily to offer something “new” in the sense that it is unprecedented and, in both a spiritual and commercial sense, *proprietary*—*something that God never revealed plainly to anyone else in the entire Body of Christ until now through Ogan*, who can advance his reputation and profit by dispensing this revelatory knowledge.

Consider: If such methods of astronomically based spiritual warfare are genuine, why doesn’t even *one* apostle or other New Testament writer set them forth and instruct us in their proper use? At best, *Triumphing at the Gates of Stars* is the fruit of Ogan’s overactive imagination; at worst, it is a calculated deception meant to ensnare the scripturally undiscerning and build the fame (and fortunes) of its inventor. Either way, he is simply making things up.

The apostle Paul’s consternation and lament in addressing the wayward Galatian believers would also seem applicable to Ogan’s teaching: “You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain” (Gal. 4:10–11 NASB).

The Bible exhorts those who handle the Scriptures to “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, NASB). This Ogan fails to do. His handling of the Scriptures is reckless, unrestrained, lacking in any principles of sound biblical interpretation, and almost completely detached from reality.

Ogan’s teaching reminds one of the Lord’s warning to His disciples about the ministry of the Pharisees: “[T]hey are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matt. 15:14)

Note well the following passage from *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, where New Testament scholar Gordon Fee writes:

Let it be said at the outset—and repeated throughout—that the aim of good interpretation is not uniqueness; one is not trying to discover what no one else has ever seen before.

Interpretation that aims at, or thrives on, uniqueness can usually be attributed to pride (an attempt to ‘outclever’ the rest of the world), a false understanding of spirituality (wherein the Bible is full of deeply buried truths waiting to be mined by the spiritually sensitive person with special insight), or vested interests (the need to support a theological bias, especially in dealing with texts that seem to go against that bias). **Unique interpretations are usually wrong.** This is not to say that the correct understanding of a passage may not often seem unique to someone who hears it for the first time. But it is to say that uniqueness is *not* the aim of our task.

The aim of good interpretation is simple: to get at the ‘plain meaning of the text,’ the author’s intended meaning. And the most important ingredient one brings to this task is an enlightened common sense. The test of good interpretation is that

it makes good sense of what is written. Correct interpretation, therefore, brings relief to the mind as well as a prick or prod to the heart.²⁴

Ogan's book is exactly the opposite of what is praised in the passage quoted above.

In conclusion, there are so many errors and falsehoods in *Triumphing at the Gates of Stars* that I'm reminded of the words my college professor wrote in a book review: "One cannot too strongly deplore the publication of a book so devoid of learning, so pretentious in its claims, and so misleading to the Christian public."²⁵

"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard
so that you are not carried away by the error of unscrupulous people
and lose your own firm commitment, but grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory,
both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

2 Peter 3:17-18

—J. Greg Sheryl

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²⁴ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (4th ed). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014, pp. 21–22; italicized emphasis in the original, boldfaced emphasis mine.

²⁵ Ernest Cadman Colwell, "Misinformation Multiplied," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 13, No. 3, July 1933, p. 334.