



Of false prophets, Noah's Ark and taxpayers

By Jim Waters

The fact that the sun rose on God's green earth on Sunday, May 22, presumably left some delusional folks in Oakland, Calif., a bit confused.

Followers of Harold Camping believed — and prepared for — the world to end on Saturday, May 21. If you're reading this column, it's a safe bet that Camping's "prophecy" was — to use a good old King James term — "false."

In Old Testament times, Camping would have been stoned for having made such an inaccurate prediction. While the practice of stoning false prophets has ended, delusion about government's role in enabling private projects continues in biblical proportions.

For example, the Kentucky Tourism Development Finance Authority (sound like a real taxpayer-friendly group?) recently [approved a \\$43 million tax credit](#) for an 800-acre biblical theme park in northern Kentucky. That's \$6 million more than we were told the project would be eligible for when the project received preliminary approval for tax incentives in December.

Gov. Steve Beshear initially lent his support to the project even though "neither Beshear nor other state officials had seen or read the study" on the operation's feasibility, reported the Lexington Herald-Leader.

So let's get this straight: The Beshear administration rammed through tax rebates for a multimillion-dollar project before it even saw a report indicating the project's chances of success? The governor and his sidekicks based their support on numbers supplied by the company doing the project — like it would provide information about similar ventures that have failed to make it without government money.

Sounds like someone may have been stoned — but not in the biblical sense.

Did the report reveal how the "Holy Land Experience" in Florida required a government rescue, or how other communities, including Lebanon and Murfreesboro, Tenn., turned down "the promise of more jobs and taxes from Bible Park USA because of concerns about a lack of information and the ultimate cost to taxpayers," as one media outlet reported?

The same news story added: "The Bible Park wanted help from state and local tax incentives to locate in Tennessee."

In an [earlier column](#) on the "Ark Encounter" project, I stated that it's improper for government to pick and choose certain companies on which to bestow tax "incentives." Supporters of the project challenged me, saying no taxes would be used "related to the construction and operation of the Ark Encounter." Mark Looy, the company's chief communications officer wrote that in the Community Recorder of Northern Kentucky.

Another false prophecy, it appears.

Along with tax rebates, the “Ark Encounter” plan also includes a proposal to make an \$11-million improvement to an interchange off Interstate 75 – specifically because of an expectation of the increased traffic created by park visitors.

So, if it’s not taxpayers providing the “assistance” that the governor indicated the park would receive, how will that transportation project get funded?

Perhaps Mr. Camping could help float the “Ark” with his money. Apparently, he doesn’t think he’ll need it.

In writing in defense of the “Close Encounter” with bad finance, Looy fails to address my claims that government should not be in the business of picking economic winners and losers, and that a better policy would be for all private firms to sink or swim on their own ability – without government “assistance.”

You might recall that Mr. Camping previously indicated the apocalypse would occur in September 1994. Amazingly, people still follow him today.

Big Government prophets for years have told us that large tax breaks for the chosen few create high-paying jobs and improve the state’s economy.

Kentucky’s [unemployment rate sits at 10 percent](#), and Forbes magazine wrote that Kentucky is the “worst-run state” in America.

Where’s a rock when you need one?

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