

God's News In The News

Week One Hundred Seventy-Nine

Prophecy Update: Why Y'All Doggin' On The Rapture?

Getting Out Of Dodge

I'm not totally sure why I'm writing with a drawl and using slang phrases, but I'm not going to blame anyone or give an explanation, because, well I'm strange and if you are listening to this podcast or reading these notes, you probably already know that. It just comes with the territory, which, by the way is part of the etymology of the phrase "Getting out of Dodge" since Dodge City, KS is the place you had to leave. Rather than bore you with my witty elocution, I'll let this explanation of the phrase from the web site *grammarist.com* (see

<https://grammarist.com/idiom/get-out-of-dodge/>) fill you in:

Get out of Dodge means to leave a place, especially in a hasty manner. The phrase get out of Dodge often is used with a qualifier, as in get the heck out of Dodge, or other phrases using stronger words. The expression get out of Dodge came into use during the mid-twentieth century in the United States and is a reference to the Old West town of Dodge City, Kansas. Dodge City, Kansas, was known as a "Wicked Little Town" because it was perched on the edge of the wild frontier. Buffalo hunters and then cowboys stopped in Dodge City for rest and relaxation, which was often wild and dangerous and involved saloons, gambling halls, brothels, and shoot-outs. Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson and their brothers were lawmen who famously kept the peace. By the turn of the twentieth century, settlers had moved into the area and Dodge City became a respectable hamlet. The legendary status of Dodge City was boosted when a radio serial set in Dodge City, Gunsmoke, came on the air in the 1950s and then made the transition to television, where it ran until the mid-1970s. The fictional lawman on the series, Marshal Dillon, was known for exhorting bad men to move on, or get out of Dodge.

And Now The Segue

No, not that goofy riding contraption that was the subject of an Internet rage back in 2001, which is actually spelled "segway", but a transition from my previous thought which is the idea of getting out of a wild and dangerous place which is not Dodge City, but Earth. You see, in some parts of Christianity we talk about an event called the Rapture and for some reason, it's not chic to believe in it these days. Well, you can talk about it but get ready for all manner of theories concerning whether it is real, when the church started believing in it, when it will happen, how it will happen and even who will experience it. I'm very serious when I tell you that I never saw the Rapture of the church as a controversial thing when I first heard it taught in the early 1970s. As a new Christian, I could be considered a young doe-eyed kid who took at face value whatever my church taught. When I was challenged to defend my stance, I defaulted to the scriptures I knew and the interpretation I was given about them. All of us, from the young to the old do the same thing and it's not really wrong unless we stray from the Bible, and in recent days, start dividing the body of Christ and even calling the doctrine demonic. Sadly, that is occurring now.

Why The Controversy?

We could chalk it up to the need to always be right and human nature being what it is, this can be quite divisive. When it's about little or inconsequential things like sports or, well just sports there is no eternal value to being right or wrong, unless you are seriously into betting and then losing your salvation is on the line. Yes, I brought up eternal security because I wanted to see if you

were still listening to me. While I could get into the weeds on the Rapture, I'm only going to deal with the more common ones being bandied about in evangelical circles with a particular focus on the Great Commission. The crowd I run in believes in the Rapture for the most part, but they are dogging on it now mainly because of some misguided folks who see it as escapism by saying things like "I can't wait for Jesus to take us out of this world!" or some other iteration of that feeling. Critics of that view of the Rapture tell us that we are putting our attention on what they say is "raptureitis," an ailment that affects people who just want to leave rather than reach the lost at any cost. And they do have a point as that has been how the Rapture has been sold to Christians for a long time. Evangelicals from the 1970s on, both in preaching and teaching and then movies and books dramatized the snatching away of the believers as a way of hope to survive the perilous times just before Jesus returns. In that light, we may have only ourselves to blame for what is happening in Christian circles.

Clean Up On Aisle Rapture

I intend to try and clear up many of the misconceptions flying around and hopefully, do the Susan Powter version of stopping the insanity that surrounds this doctrine. Who is that? Do an internet search later, but for now let's see if we can clear up this whole escapism thing surrounding the doctrine of Jesus taking His church out of the world just before the seven-year Tribulation period and I'm hoping we can all agree will happen. Since I spent, like 12 lessons on the Rapture not that long ago, I've gathered some information that I can share, chief of these is the purpose for the Rapture and why it shouldn't bother Christians as much as does. For the purpose of brevity, I'm going to start with you believing it is in the Bible. If you don't believe in it then move along now. Come back when you're ready to hear more. I'm fully prepared to have an intellectually honest conversation with anyone who is also civil about it. So, the Rapture is a real thing.

Why Is The Rapture Needed?

Briefly, the Rapture is Jesus coming for His Body and taking us from this world to be with Him in Heaven while the Tribulation happens. There are two main reasons for this. One, we aren't appointed to wrath, which is one of the main features of that time on earth. Second, we have to leave for the spirit of Antichrist to dominate the world, specifically the Antichrist himself to come on the scene. As to the first point, Jesus returns as a savior from wrath as seen in these verses:

Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. (Luke 21:36, NKJV)

Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (Rom 5:9, NKJV)

...and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Thess 1:10, NKJV)

For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. (1 Thess 5:9-10, NKJV)

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (Rev 3:10, NKJV)

That last verse from **Revelation** talks about keeping His command, which included fulfilling the Great Commission. No escapism there.

No Wrath For You!

When I say that in my head I think of the soup nazi from the comedy show *Seinfeld*, but for Christians it is an important distinction. There is a significant difference between wrath and persecution. Wrath is for unbelievers only. Period. Probably the most significant and common of the arguments for this theory deals with the nature of the seventieth week of **Daniel** (the tribulation period). The "*tribulation*" describes a period of suffering unsurpassed, "*such as was not since there was a nation, no, nor shall be*" (**Dan. 12:1**). The suffering is to be greater than anything that has yet been seen. The very nature of the tribulation period is that of wrath (**Rev. 6:16-17;; 11:18; 14:19; Zeph. 1:15, 18**). Yet we see in **1 Thess. 5:9** that the church is not appointed unto wrath, but unto salvation by Jesus. The simple use of logic would indicate that the church would have to be gone during this time of wrath.

The Purpose of Wrath: Prepare The Jews For Their Messiah

It is also important to look at God's purpose for this world during the seven-year tribulation period. The first great purpose of this time is to prepare the nation Israel for her Messiah. **Mal. 4:5-6** tells us that God will send Elijah to preach to prepare Israel for the Second Advent. The tribulation is primarily Jewish. We see many Scriptures that indicate the "*Jewishness*" of this time. It is said to be the "*time of Jacob's trouble*." It concerns "*Daniel's people*," a "*false Messiah*," the city of Jerusalem, the twelve "*tribes of Israel*," the "*son of Moses*," and flight on the "*Sabbath*." All of these speak of Israel and prove that the tribulation is a time that God will deal with His ancient people.

The Purpose of Wrath: Judgment on Unbelieving Man And Nations

Another purpose of God at this time is to pour out judgment on unbelieving man and nations (**Isa. 26:21; 2 Thess. 2:12; Rev. 14:7; 15:4; 16:5-7**). God has not appointed His children to wrath, nor to judgment resulting in punishment. Christians will be judged at the judgment seat of Jesus (**2 Cor. 5:10**) but this is not a judgment in the sense of a trial, to determine whether the judged are guilty (lost) or innocent (saved), for all that are present will be saved. At the cross the believer's sins were judged and punished in the person of his substitute Savior (**Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:25-28; Gal. 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24**).

Saved From Not Through

Nowhere in Scripture are we told that God will make special provisions for the church to escape this wrath and judgment during the time of tribulation. The only special provisions we see are for the 144,000 which are of the tribes of Israel (**Rev. 7:14**). Therefore, it is clear that the church will not be on the earth during this time and has obviously been raptured according to **1 Thess. 4:13-18**. Hopefully all of these scriptures will help in unraveling this point. Again, arguing over this helps no one, let alone Christians who study their Bible. *14 Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. (2 Tim 2:14, NIV)*

If all parties agree to debate and not get into a shouting match, then a discussion should go forward. Otherwise, there is the risk that rather than engaging in a fruitful exercise of biblical clarity such discussion deteriorates into heated arguing and loss of friendships. It is usually better to agree to disagree when things stop being cordial.

Restraining The Antichrist

My purpose now is to refute the talk of escapism in those who believe in the Rapture and I'm coming at it in a different way. You see, we play a major part in restraining the Antichrist until his time comes. I'll start with a familiar verse in Paul's message to the Thessalonians:

For the mystery of lawlessness [rebellion against divine authority and the coming reign of lawlessness] is already at work; [but it is restrained] only until he who now restrains it is taken out of the way. (2 Thess 2:7, AMP)

This famous scripture was written to the Thessalonians to assure them the Rapture had not occurred because the Antichrist was not able to be fully unrestrained. But the question has always been who or what is restraining the man of sin from coming out of the shadows. There are many theories but only one that makes total sense when you consider all the different factors.

What We Know

There are few things we already know these things about the restrainer:

- The Restrainer is referred to as both neuter (τὸ κατέχον [to katechon] , “what is restraining”) and masculine (ὁ κατέχων [ho katechōn] , “He who now restrains”).
- The Restrainer existed in Paul's day.
- The Restrainer has been continually and effectively restraining for nearly 2,000 years so far.
- The Restrainer is powerful enough to suppress the spiritual powers of darkness seeking to promote the man of sin.
- The restraint is global.

Knowing these conditions, who or what is the restrainer?

The Various Possibilities

To some is human government needs to be taken out his way, but human government is not seen as ending even after the Antichrist is revealed. And some governments actually promote sin. To others it was the Roman Empire, but that ended without the son of perdition showing up. Some thought it was the preaching of the Gospel, but such preaching doesn't end even after the Tribulation starts. And some think it is Satan himself, but why would he ever restrain sin in any form?

The Best Choice

The restrainer has to be a force that is global and supernatural in nature. Of all the possible explanations, only the Holy Spirit fits all the characteristics. Only He has the power to restrain Satan for close to 2,000 years because He has done it before (see **Gen 6:3; Gen 20:6; John 16:18**). It fits the identity of the restrainer since the Holy Spirit is both gender neutral and male in Scripture. But that leads us to another question. If the Holy Spirit is who holds everything together (see **Genesis 1:1–2; Job 26:13**), how can He be removed from the Earth? The simple answer is can't. How do we reconcile this?

A Powerful Solution

It is not the Holy Spirit in general that needs to get out of the way, it is His influence and presence that needs to be removed. As Jesus told his disciples before He left, He needs to leave so the Holy Spirit can come and dwell inside them, be with them all the time. This was a totally new concept and just as the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, He will leave at the Rapture of the church since the believers He indwells will no longer remain on the earth. And this was exactly Paul's logic when he told the Thessalonians this. If they were still on the earth, the Antichrist can't be revealed. Simple as that.

How Do We Help?

The restraining is not passive, it is a constant, ongoing restraining which means we can actively restrain the Antichrist by letting the Holy Spirit work through us to hold back the things the spirit of the Antichrist promotes. This includes working to reduce lawlessness, spiritual coldness, and disunity. It also means promoting and living a Godly life. It means we are the most evangelical believers, too. Overall, it means just being active believers in the world influences it and restrains the spirit and actual presence of the Antichrist. In fact, just allowing Him to be seen and going into places that are currently havens for that unholy spirit weakens the influence that spirit has. It is an amazing thing really and something we need to be constantly cognizant of as we live out our lives. So if one truly believes in the Rapture, they work the hardest, not the least.

I Could Go On And On

But having five pages of notes is not a short teaching is it? However, hopefully this puts to rest the notion that people wanting to be Raptured are not people who are trying to avoid working for the kingdom, at least those who know what the Rapture truly is for. I guess I would say that we need to be the people who give it a good name to offset those who don't. And slow the roll of those bashing the Rapture when they should be promoting it and say once and for all there is value in being prepared. Paul in his writings mentions that *“denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:12-14, NKJV)*

People who really know what the blessed hope of the Rapture is are people who are zealous for good works. Can I get an amen?