

GNITN

#305

Prophecy Update: Gettin' Out Of Dodge

Gunfight At The OK Corral

In what is considered the most infamous gunfight in the history of the wild west. Here is how the web site Wikipedia [characterized](#) it:

The gunfight at the O.K. Corral was a gunfight that lasted less than a minute between lawmen led by Virgil Earp and members of a loosely organized group of outlaws called the Cowboys that occurred at about 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 26, 1881, in Tombstone, Arizona, United States. It is generally regarded as the most famous gunfight in the history of the American Old West.

The city and the events there would go on to inspire one of the longest running shows in television history, *Gunsmoke*, which ran for 20 years. During its run, a phrase they used constantly made its way into the American psyche: Get out of Dodge. There are of course many iterations of it, the one I'm using is the slang of it: Getting' out of Dodge. While it generally meant leave town before I make you leave, two of the men who were at the center of the fight actually ran from it to avoid getting shot. We can debate how things really happened and even where it happened, but getting out of Dodge essentially means to leave before judgment comes.

A Strange Segue

I might be known for this, but I like to make things interesting when making points and this one is no different. You see, a little Rapture bashing took place this week and it made me want to address this controversial topic yet again. From my perspective, it's not really controversial, but people get their hackles up for some common reasons, the main one is that people who believe it are escapists and quit working to fulfill the Great Commission. In essence, these Christians pack their Rapture bags and rollout their Rapture rugs and go to the highest point in their city to somehow make it easier for Jesus to take them out of the world to avoid persecution. Critics are other Christians who sometimes make fun of people who want to avoid hard times and tough jobs by, as I put it, gettin' out of Dodge. While there are some who actually say this in one form or another, the Bible doesn't come close to supporting it and, for my money, the people who fervently adhere to this doctrine work the hardest for the Kingdom. Allow me to elaborate.

Where Did This Rapture Bashing Start?

Some say that the teaching of the Rapture of the Church before the Great Tribulation starts wasn't even around until around 1827 by a man named John Darby. However, it is found repeatedly in the Old Testament with examples of raptures given. My point is not to prove the existence of the Rapture which, for this lesson I am making the assumption that you already believe in it. I just want to clarify why it is needed and why the Body of Christ needs to be taken from the earth for prophecy to be fulfilled. Modern bashing of the doctrine often mentions the recency of its popularity as I pointed out earlier. But the recent bashing appears to come from people I really respect and who are wanting to inspire the Church to increase their work. They are not fans of those who talk about the great snatch as a way of battenning down the hatches and hoping to be rescued quickly. Yes, there is an element of the teaching that tells us we are going to miss the Tribulation, but that really should inspire us to work harder to not only be part of the

Rapture, but to make sure as many people as possible also join us. Belittling the Rapture because some people only see it from one perspective is to literally throw out the baby with the bath water.

Basic Reasons For The Rapture: Restraining Ends

And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. (2 Thess 2:6-7, NKJV)

The Antichrist could be waiting in the wings now, but the point I want to make is that this man of sin can't fulfill his satanic agenda with this restrainer and restraining present. As I've taught many times before, the restrainer is Holy Spirit but it is His special presence dwelling inside of each and every believer that keeps the lawless one from even coming on the world stage. In every generation of the Church age, the Devil has his potential Antichrist primed and ready to go at the drop of a demonic hat, but that nefarious moment can't materialize with God's people around. In His providence, He put in place a strong power to hold back the son of perdition so that His desire that none should perish without knowing Him could take place for as long as it takes. The entire Body of Christ has to leave in the twinkling of an eye for Satan to establish the rule of the Antichrist. In a twisted way, the Devil believes in and hopes for the Rapture more than some theologians.

Basic Reasons For The Rapture: Purity

2 Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. 3 And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3, NLT)

I also like how the Living Bible translates verse three:

3 And everyone who really believes this will try to stay pure because Christ is pure.

I know how much work went into my wife's preparation for our wedding day. The flowers, the Bible, the actual dress, the invites, they all had to be just right. But in our case, we waited so that our first time was with each other. We took the purity vow seriously. And it is the same with this teaching found here in the epistle of John. Those who are looking for His appearing want to look and be just right for that moment. And since it could happen at any moment, this readiness is constant. I like how an article from gotquestions.org explains this spectacular moment:

We shall see Him as He is means that our ability to appreciate and understand the depth, breadth, and fullness of Christ—and who we are in Christ—will only be complete when He returns. When we stand before Him, our spiritual eyes will be wide open, expanding our visual field to take in all of Him. Again, Paul verifies that we “are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Right now, while we live in this fallen world, the transformation process is gradual, inconsistent, and sometimes imperceptible. But, when we are in the presence of Jesus, our transformation will be swift and all-encompassing. We will see the Son in all His magnificent glory, and, at last, we will fully comprehend what it means to be a child of God.

The Rapture gives us that edge and that motivation.

Basic Reasons For The Rapture: His Love For Us

For God has not appointed us to [incur His] wrath [He did not select us to condemn us], but [that we might] obtain [His] salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah)... (1 Thess 5:9, AMPC)

When people talk about how wimpy some believers are that they want to avoid persecution by way of the Rapture they miss more than a few key points. The Tribulation is a time of wrath, not persecution. In **1 Thessalonians 5** Paul is telling the church at Thessalonica that they aren't going through the Tribulation because God loves us and that we aren't meant to suffer His wrath. And this point is made another way when Paul tells the church they aren't children of wrath anymore as we read in another [article](#) from [gotquestions.org](#):

Paul calls all of us “children of wrath” in Ephesians 2:3 because, prior to knowing Christ, everyone was under the judgment of God. Because of Adam’s original sin and the way we continued to sin against one another and against God, we all deserved God’s wrath. God is just, and the just response to our sins is condemnation. Thankfully, God is also merciful, and He did not leave us in our pitiful condition. Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins, so that anyone who accepts His gift of grace will never have to pay the wages of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23a)... Thanks be to God, He did not leave us in a hopeless state! He stepped in and saved us, rescuing us from the great trouble we created. Jesus died on the cross, taking our sins upon Himself, and then rose again, defeating death. Anyone who comes to Him will be saved (Romans 10:9–13). Because of God’s gift, we are no longer children of wrath, but children of God, adopted into His family and given eternal life with Him (Galatians 3:26–29; 1 John 3:1–3). In His grace, “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Paul marvels at the magnitude of what God has done for us former children of wrath: “Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4–7).

The wrath in the Tribulation is not meant for us as well. We will be taken out of a world that will see His wrath, a wrath that isn't meant for us simply because He adopted us in love to be children of God after being children of wrath.

Looking For His Appearing

In heaven a crown is waiting for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And not just to me but to all those whose lives show that they are eagerly looking forward to his coming back again. (2 Tim 4:8, TLB)

This “looking” is much more than a prisoner watching for his chance to get out of prison and escape his punishment. Pastor and author John MacArthur says this from his [book](#)

The Second Coming: Signs of Christ's Return and the End of the Age:

Jesus’ imminent return should motivate the believer to live godly in an ungodly world. The word looking in Titus 2:13 is the key for that to happen. To be “looking” means that we live each day in continual anticipation and expectancy, with the conviction that Jesus could come at any time. That hope becomes a transforming reality in this life, resulting in God being glorified through us

(1 Corinthians 10:31). The blessed hope brings us joy and cheers us through the trials of this world. It should also cause us to stop and evaluate our thinking, words, and actions.

This “looking” is not passively waiting, but actively living a life that gets progressively better by intentionally obeying His commands, laying aside the sin that so easily entangles us, and purposely patterning our lives to model the one lived by Jesus. You may not believe in the Rapture, but by doing these things you actually are. Just gazing into the sky is not looking. Being holy is. To which I say Maranatha!