

The Curse, Cubed

Witnessing Tools

Wednesday, January 04, 2012

Pete Garcia

The world we live in is in increasing revolt against the human inhabitants that currently take residence here.

Not only is weather and solar events causing massive disruption here on planet earth, but the natural world is increasingly becoming hostile as well.

When man lost the title deed to the earth at the Garden of Eden, it not only physically changed our world, but it fundamentally changed the way man would live in the world.

Imagine a person who has spent his whole life inside an enclosed cell with no windows or contact with the outside world. Would he know any better? Or would he think that was all there was to life? We have been in this fallen state all of our lives, and we have known no other existence other than the bitter harsh reality that is this world.

Adam and Eve were created and placed inside the Garden of Eden to manage and care for this particular piece of real estate. Once they sinned, they were removed from this garden paradise and had to leave for the world outside the Garden. Not to say that the world outside the garden was harsh at first, but certainly it was no Garden of Eden. The future flood would erase any trace of the Garden of Eden.

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

Genesis 3:17-18

I think we often overlook the words 'toil' and 'cursed' when reading through the first few chapters of Genesis. When man fell from innocence, not only was he cursed, but the entire natural order had the sin-burden placed upon it.

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:22...*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*

So it's not just the earth itself that is groaning and travailing, but the "whole creation" which would include the living non-human creatures as well. We all collectively feel this heavy oppressive burden placed upon us. The animal world is no different. Mysterious animal die-offs recently have had the whole world wondering, what is going on?

I know that thorns and thistles serve a scientific purpose to protect the plants. Plants did not have nor need this protection prior to the fall of mankind, as man, beast, and every creeping thing were given plants for food to eat on the sixth day of creation. (Genesis 1:29-30) Plant life went from being bountiful and helpful, to something man would have to labor for. It went from being something pleasant and harmless, to something man would have to use caution over. This is how it has been for the last 6,000 years. Man has known nothing but labor and toil under the sun. But the Noahic covenant introduces a new change by divine declaration.

Noahic Covenant

"And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand." Genesis 9:2

A question I've come to consider is, why only curse the ground (and by extension the plant kingdom) after the fall of Adam? It would be another 1500 years before God would put the fear of man on animals. But why the 1500 year delay? It could be that animals were corrupted by the Nephilim by genetic tampering, much as man might have been. Man's genetic makeup was corrupted to prevent a Messiah from ever coming. The animal world might have been corrupted to spite God's creation. In Genesis 9:5, God extends the capital punishment decree to not just man, but to beasts as well.

All we really know is that by the time Noah's generation had come, all of creation would become corrupt, so much so that God would destroy the entire world with a global flood (Genesis 6:7). Noah, his family, and those animals chosen to carry on the species after the flood would be the only survivors from this cataclysmic judgment.

God's watery judgment upon mankind reduced the population from billions, down to just eight people. That population level wouldn't be reached again until well into the 20th century. But as mankind's population has increased, modern technology has allowed man to move further and further into the wilderness. And when push comes to shove, man is just no match for what the natural world can dish out.

The Pale Rider

"So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth." Revelation 6:8

As Christians we know that God is in control and is holding the reigns back until the last possible moment until He comes again for His bride, the Church.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 states the Holy Spirit is restraining evil in this world, but I believe He is also restraining all of creation from going into open revolt.

Jesus likened the last days to be similar to birth pangs on a woman in labor. The pangs would be the events listed in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, and they would happen with greater frequency and intensity as time drew to a close. Once the Church is removed, all hell will break loose upon earth. It won't be just man killing man and earthquakes; the animal kingdom will rise up as well.

Think about this for a moment. The Rapture will have removed millions from the planet leaving empty houses full of food, water, and warmth attracting looters and animal kind alike. By the time the pale horse is released in the fourth seal, countless millions will have already been killed by war, famine, and violence from both the human and natural cataclysmic disasters. Abandoned houses, looted stores, restaurants, and other places will attract wild and feral animals to take shelter. The general chaotic lawlessness will abruptly end most societal services such as electric, gas, water, and trash to large portions of the country. Think about what your neighborhood would be like if no trash were collected for a several months.

While it is common to think of the Hollywood version of the "post-apocalyptic" world in which the wilderness has overtaken cities, but I think very much this will be the case for large portions of the country. Man will not only have wild animals to deal with. The fourth seal judgment will leave a trail of victims due to viruses and bacterial diseases such as Ebola, Rabies, Malaria, Tuberculosis, Pneumonia, Influenza, Plague, West Nile Virus, SARS, Swine Flu, Bird Flu to name a few, that will tragically sweep across the globe. Maybe this was what Jesus was referencing when saying:

"And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." Matthew 24:22

I think it's easy to overlook these things, as most of us live in homes that more or less have basic services supplied to us through the society we live in. When that society breaks down due to the Rapture and the ensuing judgments in the Tribulation, nature will begin to fill that vacuum that mankind has left. Tragedy, grief, and sorrow will be multiplied to the extent that life will become unbearable.

It should be a reminder to man in which the status he has fallen from, and who his Creator is. Man was created to have dominion over this planet, yet the planet has had dominion over man for these last 6,000 years. Man can see the dreadful power in a hurricane and in deadly disease such as the Bubonic plague.

It should be a wake-up call for those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, to make that decision now before they have to face these coming days of judgment.

American Albatross

Globalism - Ecumenism

Tuesday, January 10, 2012

Pete Garcia

It's very easy to be labeled a 'doom and gloomer' these days for simply reporting the facts. "But facts are a stubborn thing", John Adams once said.

Seemingly simple problems for nations to solve often come with extremely complex strings attached. The United States is addicted to spending money. What does one do if they are neck deep in debt? Well, for starters, you stop spending so much money. The muddy water's part is where to stop spending and which programs you're going to cut to actually make a difference.

The United States purse strings are ultimately being pulled in two different directions between the far left and the far right. Each side has their sacred cows they refuse to touch and will only do so at an excruciatingly high cost to the other side. I realize I'm staying pretty vague here, but my intent is to show you the forest and the trees, seeing the picture as a whole, rather than just individual issues.

Our system has three legs of power that constitute the operational managers of a system of systems. The controlling authority being an architectural contract created by the founding fathers of this nation 236 years ago. The basic premise is that man does not guarantee our rights, God does. The three branches of government act to serve as a check and balance against themselves, to prevent anyone from becoming too powerful. So let us do a quick review of how that is going thus far.

The Trees

One branch has the responsibility to execute the duties of leadership and enact the laws and powers granted to it by a bi-house congressional legislative body. It has worked around the legislative body by creating a small army of un-elected techno/bureaucrats. It has ignored or bypassed the legislation to initiate warfare, emplace unconstitutional bureaucratic legislation (mandatory healthcare), and refused to enforce the laws that are already in place.

The other branch entrusted with creating the laws and control spending, can't because it remains too entrenched in the pockets of special interest groups. The handful of actual honest and trustworthy ones have a difficult time getting anything passed either by committee or through house votes due to the divisiveness of the interests represented there. Both houses recognize the dire dilemma we are in financially but can't even agree to meaningful steps toward achieving that goal.

The last branch acts as the legal authority that enforces the laws of the land as an ultimate last resort of legal interpretation of the architecture otherwise known as the Constitution. The problem with this branch is, lifetime appointments that were meant as a safeguard against knee-jerk movements of the political climate of any given decade, also means that they become defenders of 'their' interpretation we have to live with for most of our lives. Appointments, whether right or left, have long-term ramifications.

And to think we have the best system on earth? The problem with our system is that man is running it. Man is flawed and sinful, therefore, unable by default of ever having a system that actually functions as it should for any longer than a brief period of time.

The Forest

Geo-political strategists often use terms like 'red-line' or 'point of no return' to signal events that once happen, can't be undone. Like the proverbial bell that cannot be 'unrung', so too are the 'red-lines' that once crossed, forever change the geo-political landscape. We (U.S.) have crossed

that economic 'red-line' some time ago. We have put ourselves in such a financially distressing position that most politicians and talking head pundits would rather discuss things from a hole in the sand than deal with them honestly. Those who are honest are labeled alarmists. Is it alarmist to yell 'fire' in a theater if it is actually on fire?

We have crossed that economic 'red-line' and have no other recourse than to radically and fundamentally change the way we function as an economy. It must change, because there simply is no other way around the magnitude of unsustainable debt we've accumulated. There are not enough years left on the planet to pay off what we owe, and by the way, we are not alone.

Budget cuts and austere fiscal measures are about as popular here as they are in places like Greece, London, and Spain. The choice will become, do we as a society agree to reduce the quality of life here in the good old US of A, or do we keep things as they are, and go to a new system? I think overwhelmingly, most people will willingly authorize the use of another currency or system in order to keep welfare, Medicare, Medicaid, and subsidies rather than lose all of them. Why? Because people still need to eat, see the doctor, and help pay the bills. People still need paychecks to own cars, put roofs over their heads, and put their kids through school.

So, we are at a loggerhead as a nation in that we have reached that point of both having unsustainable debt and an unwillingness to change our ways. Something will have to give, and I'm willing to bet that tweaking the Constitution is going to be sold as the least painful option. And once we go to a global currency (whatever that looks like) we will no longer control our nation. Don't believe me that we are that close to doing it? Look at the chaos the world is currently enduring: a promising nuclear and genocidal Iran, a hermit nuclear nation ran by a 29 yr. old, a burgeoning Russia and China, suicidal and maniacal jihadists, and 35 other armed conflicts currently ongoing in the world today and we want to SHRINK our military? We want to reduce the means by which we have to defend ourselves. Things must be a lot worse than anyone can imagine.

The big picture is that America is at that point where it is now willing to trade autonomy for security. Soon, we will be no different than Greece or Italy. We just have the best militaries right now, which is why no one is forcing our hand at the moment. But there is coming a day when all our military-might will not be able to stop the forces seeking to force us to become subservient in our role as the big stick in someone else's hand. The wealth, power, and might of the US will come to naught pretty soon, and everything people have worked and slaved away for all their lives will seem rather irrelevant in the months and years to come.

Silver Lining

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21

Where is your treasure laid up? Is it in the next Ronald Reagan? Gold and silver? A 401K with stock options? This age is coming rapidly to a close. Our current system is unraveling faster and faster and if you've placed your faith and trust in your own ability to provide a long, comfortable life, you're going to be disappointed.

Satan can see the storm clouds gathering, so he's instituting his plans with greater swiftness and ferocity. The fact that we are becoming irrelevant is only relevant as it pertains to how close we are to the end of this dispensation. It is becoming more and more apparent that the US will not have some kind of massive revival and repent as a nation again.

There is a reason why the Bible makes no mention of great nation in the west in the last days. Regardless of how it happens, something does. We are as a nation, buckling under our own

weight. At this point, super-committees and last-minute budget deals are as meaningful as rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

The silver lining is that salvation is yours for the asking. You need only place your faith in Jesus Christ to change your life and your eternal destiny forever. Oh, and some sound spiritual advice is, you shouldn't wait too long either. Because His return is a lot sooner than you think.

Who Dares, Wins

In Defense of the Faith

Monday, January 16, 2012

Pete Garcia

In this drama we call life, there are Winners and Losers. According to the world's standards, he who dies with the most toys wins. It is about being the best, pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps, and attaining fame and fortune. The world certainly has their favorites and for a season, they are celebrated. The losers are everyone else.

The Losers are those who don't get invited, don't have the good seats, or legions of paparazzi who capture their every waking moment. The 'losers' are generally considered that great 'unwashed mass' in the center of the country, who the movie stars, politicians, and the rich and famous generally try to avoid.

But popularity, like the weather, are often fickle companions. They continually feed on change to keep things fresh and exciting. The rich and famous of the forties and fifties are the elderly today. Today's generation doesn't know, or don't care who and what they used to do. The rebels of the sixties are considered rather mild mannered compared to today's rabble rousers. Those who were considered daring and radical back then, star in Infomercials today. All the while, that great 'unwashed' mass of men and women raise families, coach Little League teams, and get the bills paid.

Imagine if you will, the world as an open-air market, and you are on the conveyor belt (time) that takes you through it. You can't get off or go backwards, but always forward. The market is full of gadgets and goodies, distractions and intrigue, and every sort of feast for the senses. It matters not what you're into, because there is a niche for it. This market's main goal is to keep you preoccupied with what's in front of you.

Everyone has their own 'thing', that if they could only master or possess, they will have 'won' by the world's standard. Heaven forbid if you die doing what you love, that only adds to the lore. But for normal folks, maybe it's a job promotion to a position you've long sought after. Maybe it's the best golf score down at the country club or marrying that beauty queen you pursued all those years.

Some people will have spent their whole lives trying to obtain whatever it is that makes them feel 'complete'. Some will spend the whole of their lives searching for that mystery that eludes them. As if unraveling it will make the jigsaw pieces of their life somehow magically fit together.

The losers usually don't get the luxury of pursuing all the frivolities this world has to offer. So what they can't get in luxury, they'll take in pride. They work, supporting families, going to war, working middle to low end jobs. In other words, just trying to survive. But Winners and Losers alike must all ride this ride. And whether you're on top, bottom, or just somewhere in the

middle, ultimately, you will reach the same destination. That destination is the same for every man and woman.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do:

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12-14 (NIV)

For those who receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, it doesn't matter what station you find yourself in life. You could be wealthy and attractive, or dirt poor and ugly. You could command a six-figure salary, or almost entirely relying on food stamps and government subsistence to stay afloat. You could be a football star, or that guy who couldn't even afford the tickets. It matters not, because if you have Jesus Christ in your heart, you've already won.

We have not won because of who we are, but who Christ is. We have won because that victory was obtained by a God-Man two thousand years ago on Calvary's Cross. So many people seek the small, irrelevant victories in this temporary life and completely overlook the one victory we can carry with us for all eternity, that being salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus.

The original painting of the "Mona Lisa" is considered to be priceless since no monetary value has been assigned to it. It is insured by the country of France and is held at the Louvre in its own 7.5-million-dollar room. But how much is a copy of the Mona Lisa worth? Probably not much.

In a strange sense of irony, a world that so reveres and holds the 'original' up as a masterpiece, has rejected humanity's *Magnum Opus*. It has rejected the archetype, for a facade. It gladly would trade the truth, for a lie. Men and women have been bought and sold a lie over and over, that salvation can't be free, that it must be earned. The world will gladly take a Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Buddha, or L. Ron Hubbard, over the Creator-in-flesh, Jesus Christ. Being Christ-like in this time and place, and you are hated with a hatred only those who dare live it out, can fully know.

People have been told that they must maintain their righteousness. People have been taught that they must strive to unravel the mysteries in order to be 'enlightened', and only then, can they be free. People have been told money, things, and prestige are all you need in this life. It is these lies that have kept a torrent of souls pouring into hell for the last 2,000 years.

"For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things." Philippians 3:18-19 (NIV)

When a brother or sister in Christ departs from this dying and fallen world, we don't mourn them like those who die without Christ. We miss them for sure, but only in the sense that we have to spend the rest of our days here without them. Those in Christ know that our common salvation will reunite us again in the next life. We will know, as we are known, and we will spend eternity wrapped in the light and glory of Jesus Christ.

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)

We recently lost a long-time member, Lou Talley. A friend, Vietnam Veteran, and most important, a brother in the body of Christ who dared to live out his faith. To my limited knowledge, Lou never made it on the 'who's who' of important busybodies in this world. As far as I know, he never won the Nobel Peace Prize, or an Emmy award. He never won the Heisman Trophy or a Grammy. But he knew Jesus as his Lord and Savior and has won eternity in glory.

(Makes all those little metal trophies seem rather insignificant, doesn't it?) We know we will see him again, and that now he is living out the hope he so long placed his faith in, on this side of life.

Sign Language

Prophecy - Signs

Monday, January 23, 2012

Pete Garcia

Thinking in generational terms, we alive today are unique in that not only have we lived through the turn of the century, but the turn of the millennia. The last time that happened, think of where the world was.

In the 10th century, Roman Catholicism dominated life in the Western Hemisphere. The Byzantine ruled in the east, competing against the Abbasid Caliphate for control. Israel had not been a nation for more than 900 years and the world was limited to the speed of a horse. It was high times in the Dark Ages. It would be another 400-500 years before men began to break away from the iron-clad grip the Roman Catholic system had over the Christian world.

But today, Israel stands as a sign to the world as a sovereign, unified nation. Not since King Solomon (10th century BC) had a free, unified Israel existed. From the Babylonian invasion (605-586 BC) on forward, Israel/Judaea, had been under the thumb of one successive Gentile oppressor after another. First it was the Babylonians, then the Persian, the Greeks, and finally the Romans. And again, ever since their national rebirth in 1948, the Gentile world courtesy of the UN, EU, Arab States, and US have been actively seeking to dismantle and dissect the tiny nation-state in order to remove its very existence from the annals of history.

How often we quickly criticize those who lived during Jesus' day for not recognizing Him as the Son of God. But they had only the Old Testament, and as Peter alluded too, the prophets themselves often didn't know or understand fully the things they were putting to scripture.

"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." (1 Peter 1:10-11 NKJV)

Today, we have the complete New Testament that shows the historical types, symbolism, and the fulfilled prophetic promises that were revealed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have 20 centuries of hindsight to look back upon and see what Christ said would happen, has. We have the technological means to verify the historical claims of the Bible and see that they are valid. Most importantly, we have the Holy Spirit who draws men and women to Christ, guides them into all truth, and testifies to the life-changing ability that God renders in the life of a person who willingly comes to Christ. How much more responsible are we today for knowing the truth, then those who lived even in Christ's day?

And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

"He answered and said to them, Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled. . ." Matthew 13:11-14 NKJV

Often the question is asked, if there is a God, and He is all good, why does He allow bad things to happen in this world? The answer is not very flattering, considering the wealth of knowledge we have at our fingertips. Since we have the abundance of proofs that prove the Bible is true, that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation, God does not need to speak to us in parable, but in an even more basic language to make His points clear.

The attacks on September 11th, the 2004 Indonesian Tsunami, 2005 Hurricane Katrina, economic collapse of 2008, 2010 Haitian earthquake, 2011 Japanese Tsunami and countless other natural and man-made disasters serve as a decreasing measure of God's patience trying to get mankind's attention. Since people today in the 'civilized world' are no longer interested in the written Word, nor paying attention to the men and women faithfully spreading the Gospel, God will use whatever method He has to wake people up.

And these Signs are the language, increasing in severity and intensity. These events have a two-fold effect on those living through them though: either they will realize the hopeless, helpless predicament they are in and turn to God, or like Pharaoh, they harden their hearts even further against Him. This world is being forced into making a decision as our time draws to a close by knocking down that proverbial fence people love to ride.

There appears to be a paradox of sorts when speaking about end-times events. We have Jesus saying it will be like the days of Noah and Lot, and that life will be moving along swimmingly when sudden destruction comes upon the earth. On the other hand, it will be perilous times, and signs will be increasingly apparent. I think in dealing with these, there are two basic groups of people. Speaking specifically to the world system, there are those in the high places who know, and they are fearful of what is coming. Then there are those who aren't in the know (general public) and are apathetic. For them, life will just go on as it always has.

But for those in the know, they are actively trying to curtail their dark future by enacting the very things they think solves the crisis, but only leads them directly into it. Both groups it seems, fulfill Biblical prophecies as it pertains to the events leading up to the Day of the Lord.

The apathetic:

"knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." 2 Peter 3:3-4 NKJV

The fearful:

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." Luke 21:25-26 NASB

There are so many things pointing to the soon return of Christ, it can in truth, be a bit overwhelming. Many have tuned-out as 'Middle East' fatigue sets in as they watch and wait on the constant build-up of pressure there. The EU and US as of late, are continually on the verge of collapse, yet they don't. The increase of natural calamities is taxing every system man has to deal with them to the point of financial exhaustion. It seemingly takes more and more to impress a world that has seen so much destruction already. There is a growing sense of trepidation for what is potentially coming our way, by a growing population on this earth. They can sense something, but since most are not Christian or prophetically inclined, they point to the Mayans or aliens as to the reason these things may happen. In truth, any explanation outside of the Bible seems reasonable to them.

So many things are happening simultaneously that it is really hard to keep a grasp on what they all mean. But for that small remnant around the world, who see these as evidential proofs of our soon returning Savior, we remain hopeful in these bittersweet, dark days.

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came

by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:19-21 NKJV

Stairway To Heaven

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Pete Garcia

"I find no fault in Him."...You can find fault in anyone else, but you can find no fault in Jesus. Holy, harmless, undefiled, sinless: there He is! Christ is God's way to man; Christ is man's way to God. Christ is the true Jacob's ladder. By Him the penitent sinner, the believing soul, the redeemed child of God may come unto the Father and enter into the house of many mansions."

George W. Truett

Since the beginning of time, mankind has been promised everything under the sun, to include god-hood, if they could only meet God halfway in the salvation process. Cain sought it in his vegetable offering. The Israelites sought it in adhering to the law, while the pagan world sought it in worshipping everything from pieces of wood to the constellations in the heavens.

Everything has been tried and found lacking outside of the Bible's prescribed method of saving man's immortal soul. There is only one bridge which gaps heaven and earth, and that man is Jesus Christ.

Since the Garden of Eden, those who worshipped Jehovah looked forward to the day a Messiah would come: Eve was promised this, Abel understood it, Enoch preached it, Noah experienced a type of it, Job knew it, and here, Jacob dreamed of it.

"At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants." Genesis 28:11-13 (NLT)

They looked forward to the day a Messiah would come, today we look back. The fulcrum of history pivots entirely on what Christ did on the cross. He, the only perfect man, died a brutal death He did not deserve as a sacrifice for the rest of humanity. His death was payment in full, once for all time, on behalf of mankind who had no way of achieving it for ourselves.

Religion and Philosophy

And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

Genesis 11:4

The best man could do was at the Tower of Babel. Babel not only put on display the arrogance and pridefulness of mankind but laid the foundation for man's future attempt at saving himself.

The world is full of religions and philosophies that promise paradise, for only a little obedience. They say, if you do this or that, you may gain entrance. Join our group, they say, for only we are enlightened and know the 'real' truth. If you join, you soon find yourselves busy, trying to follow their rules and regulations. You might feel good about yourself at first, thinking you're doing your part for the higher good, but when all your best efforts fail to remove that emptiness, it will consume you. Their enlightenment does nothing to lift the burden of sin that you must still carry

around. You will find as much meaning in a works-based salvation as does a hamster find freedom on an exercise wheel.

Pride

This world, outside of Jesus Christ, at best can only offer what creature-comforts fortune and fame in this life. It has no authority or power in the next, so through the use of rather effective propaganda, it has made the central slogan in humanity to date, 'get what you can, while you can'.

This propaganda comes wrapped in many different packages: patriotism, wealth, piety, fame, and renown to name a few. If for nothing else, you want to feel as if you've led a life of accomplishment, with a tombstone that bears: 'here lies _____, a man/woman of vision'. You may want to be remembered as having died a hero or having left behind something that benefits mankind. Maybe your name was made in academia, having achieved a level of elevation that your thoughts and opinions somehow carry greater weight than the average man. Whatever pursuit you have sought out for yourself in this life, without Jesus Christ as your foundation, what good does it do you?

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" **Mark 8:36**

Jesus Christ

Christianity on the other hand, is God reaching down to mankind and bridging the gap between Heaven and Earth through Jesus Christ

Christianity says that mankind could never be good enough to do it for themselves, because it is impossible. We miss a vital ingredient in meeting God's perfect standard of righteousness. The law was given so that mankind could realize the extent of his/her sinfulness. A good example of the purpose of God's law would be the bathroom mirror, soap, and water. The bathroom mirror, like the law, was meant to show man how sinful and decrepit he really was. If you had no mirror, you would have no way of knowing how dirty you really were. Yet, the mirror has no ability in and of itself to clean you, it can only expose the filthiness. The blood of Jesus Christ then is like the soap and water, applied once, forever makes you acceptable in the sight of God.

The law, good works, personal righteousness, and morality are good things, but they can't bridge the gap between God and man, because a man by nature is sinful, and God perfect. There needed to be something (or someone) who could close the space, being both. Jesus was fully human, and also fully God. He could not be an acceptable sacrifice on behalf of mankind if He were any less, or any more than He was. That is why belief in the Virgin birth, sinless life, and resurrection are vital to believing in who Jesus was.

If you take any of those away from who you believe He was, then He would not be sufficient. He would be 'another' Jesus' incapable of saving your soul.

The Mormon's, Jehovah Witnesses, Muslims, and any other group who replaces the Jesus of the Bible with another Jesus, might be morally holy, pious, and admirable people, but still fall short of God's standard of perfection, therefore, doomed like the most heinous of the wicked to spend an eternity separated from God.

It might seem completely unfair to man, who has been taught so long that he must earn his keep, that he has no real ability to affect his or her own salvation. It is unfair. God did all the work. All we can do, is what Christ said we could do to be saved...that is to believe in who He is and accept that sacrifice in our stead.

Although we don't fully comprehend God's plan for mankind, we know He desires to spend eternity with those, who by freewill, choose to know and love Him. God knows who will come to Him, and yet, has left the door open to all which to my tiny, feeble mind, still seems incomprehensible.

Why would God, who spoke the universe into existence, be mindful of me? I know that someday, this will make sense. For now, I am just grateful that I do know Him as Lord and Savior. But I'll leave you with this excellent example from Dr. Harry Ironside, that maybe puts this into a little bit of perspective.

“This illustration is of the sinner coming to the door of salvation (John 10:9). Above the door was a sign which says, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). The sinner responds to this gracious invitation, trusts Christ and he is gloriously saved. He now turns around and looks at the door through which he had just entered. He sees above the door another sign which says, "Chosen...in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesian 1:4). Both are true. Both are taught in the Bible. Both must be believed.”

Club Med

Globalism - Ecumenism

Monday, February 06, 2012

Pete Garcia

While currently not burning up any headlines in our recent past, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has slowly been making headway over key foundational issues.

So what makes this union of nations so critical to understanding Biblical prophecy? Considering that two of the key end-time players are a national Israel, and a revived Roman Empire, it has a lot to do with it.

Currently, we know that the structure of the European Union is unsustainable in its current form. Many of the leading economic giants like former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and billionaire bad boy George Soros have said as much. The truth is, we are watching the pages of Scripture literally coming to fulfillment before our very eyes. The Bible talks of 10 kings that will arise in the end times. From Daniel's perspective in 5th century BC:

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns." (Daniel 7:7)

What John was shown at the end of the 1st century AD:

“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.” (Revelation 17:12)

From Daniel's perspective, there was no distinction between a future coming Roman empire and what we see today. This was all still future to him, and as history has borne out, one would be logically lead to believe that such a kingdom would have found its complete fulfillment in ancient Rome. But John, having been given further insight to this, was alive at the height of the then Roman Empire, and he is told these kings had not yet received authority, which has to mean that this was as of yet, still future to John.

Historically speaking, what is described here in Daniel and Revelation, has not yet occurred. Rome only ever operated with one emperor at a time, the exception being when the empire split in half with one ruling in the west (Rome) and the other ruling in the east (Constantinople) somewhere in the 4th century AD.

Our world today has become interlinked to the point that what happens in Greece will have ripple effects all the way to Japan. Depending on the size of a nation and their GDP, will

predictably determine the level of effects it will have on the world should significant changes happen.

When the United States collapses (which we are currently in the process of but aren't admitting), the world will be left reeling. The Lehman Brothers collapse in 2008 put the frailty of our economic situation on full parade for the world, which is why the world is in a mad dash for another system to be in place before this scenario happens again.

The American Model

So far, Europe has had two hundred and thirty-four years to see how America has worked. We broke the mold, if you will, for modern nations. Nations who are linked together by a common currency, economy, and religious tolerance are much less likely to fight. True, we had a Civil War in the 1860's, but it took around 250 years from the founding of Jamestown to reach that point, and somehow our Union has still held together until this day.

Europe, and all its royal kings and queens, had been the center of the world's power and attention for thousands of years. America, at its founding, was a backwater wilderness where Christian fundamentalists went to slug it out in a spartan existence. Americans are the newcomers, and we have really only been the 'center' of the world's attention for not quite even a century.

At the time we were considered to be the largest Christian nation in the world who just happens to come to prominence after the Europeans, Russians, Chinese, and everyone else took the beating of a lifetime. We became the last man standing if you will, at the end of World War II, just in time to arm and support a re-born national Israel. Coincidence?

How is the UfM different?

Currently, the problem in the European Union is that it expanded too fast to properly deal with the realities of the financial and cultural disparities such a diverse union was bound to face.

All historical baggage aside, Europe's expensive and expansive socialists' programs bankrupted their systems, and morally bankrupted generations of Europeans into a 'cradle to grave' mentality, hopelessly addicted to a nanny-state. But Europe wants that limelight back, and they can see the winds of fortune changing in their direction, and so a political entity like the UfM is just thinking ahead of the curve.

First off, let's revisit and see where this all stemmed from originally. The idea was first touted at the Barcelona Process in 1995. The idea was out there floating around the atmosphere as a good idea, but no serious momentum built up until French President Nicolas Sarkozy made it part of his 2007 reelection campaign motto. What really motivated him to run with this idea?

The goal of Sarkozy's Club Med is therefore not, after all, to reinforce the geopolitical weight of France, but instead to consolidate the power of NATO and the United States over the Middle East. (Source)

Really it is European Colonialism 2.0 with the Arab/Israeli peace agreement thrown in there for good measure. The intent therefore is to rub out any form of Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, tap into a vast resource of oil, natural gas, and cheap labor. But none of that is possible until the Israelis and her angry neighbors come to some sort of peace-agreement and finally, once and for all, lay down their arms. What better way to do this than to incorporate them into the same empire?

What makes the leadership of the UfM think they have what it takes to succeed by mixing Southern Europeans with North African Muslims, Jews, Lebanese, Arabs, and Turks?

For starters, they too have a shared history. They all belonged to the Roman and Byzantine empires for hundreds of years. (It wasn't until Islam became big enough to become a threat,

that it became the threat.) They would control three of the most strategic waterways in the world: the Strait of Gibraltar, Suez Canal, and Strait of Hormuz. They would control over half of the world's oil and natural gas reserves. Lastly, they would control the centers of the world's three main religions: Mecca, Rome, and Jerusalem.

Adding to the mix is the gargantuan natural gas fields found off the coasts of Israel and in the shared waters with Greek Cyprus, which has the potential to be a real boom for both economies. Certainly this will be incorporated into the final paperwork that accompanies any type of peace agreement as Europe seeks a more reliable energy partner.

The UfM could then be the main supplier of energy to the rest of the northern EU member nations, pumping much needed wealth into Greece, Italy, France, and Spain. A large, unemployed labor force eagerly looking for work within the north African nations could facilitate the building and working of the pipelines, oil rigs, and transportation of oil and gas. The UfM could use the framework of NATO (or NATO itself) as the billy-club to wallop any nation(s) who threatens to disrupt the peace again. I believe Libya was the test run for this sort of military diplomacy.

The Psalm 83/Isaiah 17 war will leave many in the Sunni-Arab world reeling from the sting of defeat yet again by the Israelis. Too many Muslims have suffered for too long either under corrupt military dictatorships, or brutal Islamic 'brotherhoods' and will seek some sense of normalcy out from underneath the banner of Sharia law. Ultimately, peace on the street and bread on the table will trump ideology.

A preemptive strike on Iran over their nuclear ambitions, and the destruction of Syria's Damascus might persuade Turkey to join out of necessity, rather than ideology. So who then is left out of the lucrative gold mine the Mediterranean nations are currently sitting on? The Magogian-Triad: Turkey, Russia, and Iran.

Likely, Turkey will seek retribution for not getting cut in on the natural gas fields sitting just outside their maritime borders. Russia will have lost a major client as Europe seeks her energy from Israel. Iran will seek revenge for her crushed nuclear ambitions and will also seek to bring out the 12th Imam from his hole in the ground. Certainly adequate motivations for an Ezekiel 38-39 scenario and formidable foes to keep the other nations at bay from bailing out Israel.

As the Middle East goes up in flames, and America falls into irrelevance, a man will step forward out of the shadows of the former Roman empire and will have a peace plan that actually works. He will succeed where all his previous predecessors have failed, thanks in large part to the foundation already being laid by the UfM, and the technological spiderweb of control that is unique to this generation. All he therefore needs is the right time, and the right emergency.

As Rahm Emanuel famously once said, "You never let a serious crisis go to waste."

The Jewish Question

Witnessing Tools

Monday, February 13, 2012

Pete Garcia

I firmly believe that this generation's greatest strength is not in the technological or academic advances we have made, but in our unique position in time with over 20 centuries of hindsight to look back on and learn from.

It is our ability to look back and see that what the Bible said would happen, has. Concerning the Jewish people, the question has been asked, 'what are we to do with them?' The Roman Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Gentile governments, and even the modern evangelicals have sought an answer to this. Most often, it has ended tragically for the Jews, and it is to this point, I would like to speak to the condition of the Jewish people from the 1st century until today.

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." Romans 11:25 NKJV

The Apostle Paul, a former Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin, wrote those words around 60AD under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the church in Rome. Sadly, this has remained the case for 1,970 years. But it is a testament to God's prophetic word, and has played out exactly as Paul states here in Romans 11:25.

The Jewish people would be in a state of partial blindness preventing them from coming to know their Messiah. Jesus said as much to the Pharisees and those listening in Matthew 23, that they would no more see Him again, until they said 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord'.

True, Jewish individuals would come, and have always come to Christ over this time period, but no widespread revival has broken out amongst the Jewish people. As alluded to in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, contrasting the high to low in Matthew (audience: Jews), with the reverse in Mark's Gospel (audience: Gentiles). So, it has happened that the Gospel of Christ crucified would diminish amongst the Jewish community and flourish with the Gentiles.

Reformation

Over the millennia, many well-intentioned Christians have reached out in good faith to the Jewish people, in an attempt to show solidarity with them and by so doing, attempt to win them over to Christianity.

Martin Luther was such a man, who after breaking the Papal bonds of legalism and ritualism, sought out the Jew as a friend. Eventually, his frustration at their refusal to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, he became increasingly antisemitic, to the point he wrote a book entitled, "On the Jews and Their Lies" in 1543. Despite the fact that his 95 Theses were key to the foundation of the Protestant Movement, it is his antisemitic views that began to flourish simultaneously in Europe's dark religious under-belly.

Antisemitism increased in Europe and was wide spread before even World War 1, and the Europeans asked the same question: what do we do about these Jews? Ultimately, this question was answered between World War I and World War II, culminating and personifying in the man Adolph Hitler and his Final Solution.

Modern Christianity

Now, it is not Christ or converting to Christ that is what is being discussed, but Christianity cloaked in man-made religion that always gets in the way of salvation. Is it any wonder that the Jews are as leery of Christians today, than they are of Muslims?

At least with Muslims, they know outright where they stand. 'Christians', and I'm using this term loosely, have over the centuries asked the question of what to do with the Jews. They were God's chosen people, the covenants and promises made to Abraham, Moses and David, yet, they rejected the One who all in the Torah looked forward to coming. The result was, in my opinion, more dangerous, albeit less violent, in dealing with the 'Jewish Problem' through either Replacement or Dual Covenant theology.

Most mainline churches (both Protestant and Catholic) adhere to what is known as Amillennialism or Post-Millennialism. An amillennialist believes there is no future kingdom coming on earth, but that it is spiritual, and that it is on-going currently. All or most prophecies concerning Jesus' Second Coming were fulfilled in 70AD, and that the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple, and the 19 century Diaspora are a testament to God being finished with the Jews.

Post-Millennialism is popular amongst Reformation, Charismatic, and Word-Faith churches who hold to either a Kingdom Now/Dominionism theology. They teach the Kingdom will not come until the Church (their believers) reclaims the entire world for Jesus Christ. In either case, the easiest solution for them in answering the Jewish question is simply to replace the Jews with the church.

Protestant denominations who promote Dual Covenant theology have not replaced the Jew but believe that the Jews are still God's chosen people, as is the Church today. They have their path to salvation (Judaism), and the Church has ours (Christianity). The only problem then would mean that if this were true, then Jesus lied in John 14:6.

Out of all the eschatological and hermeneutical views available to the Christian today, only Pre-Millennial Dispensationalism deals with the proper relationship that the Jew and the Church experience today. First and foremost, is recognizing that anyone who comes to Christ during this dispensation, becomes a part of the spiritual body of Christ (i.e... the Church), regardless of whether they are Jew or Gentile. Secondly, the Church is not Israel, nor Israel the Church. Israel has been temporarily set aside in order that God will take a people for Himself...but He is not yet through with the Jewish people. They will come to a point when they recognize Jesus for who He was (and is), and so doing, 'all Israel will be saved'.

As this age draws to a close, God will remove His Church at the Rapture, and will once again, return His gaze upon the apple of His eye and purge them with a refiner's fire during the seven year Tribulation known to the Jew as the 70th Week of Daniel. I would say that leading up to that time, the Evangelical Christian would stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jew, but sadly, a disturbing and growing trend amongst evangelicals is that they too are buying into either Replacement or Dual Covenant theology, thereby turning their back on Israel at a time when they need Christians the most.

You don't have to be a Pre-millennial Dispensationalist to be a friend of Israel, but it sure makes it a whole lot easier when you can see the beauty in the big picture and know that our support for Israel and the Jews is not duplicitous in replacing them, or erroneously loving them into hell. The question we ask, is not; what should we do with the Jew? But what could God do with us, if He could break His gifts and calling to the natural branches the Jews?

"Concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all."

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

"For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?"

"Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?"

"For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Romans 11:28-36 NKJV

Pause for Effect

Prophecy - Signs

Monday, February 20, 2012

Pete Garcia and Alf Cengia

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

Luke 12:40

We often talk of how close we are to the return of Jesus Christ, and the imminence of His return still lingers in the air - yet that day seems so far away at times. So many 'could be' dates have come and gone. So many seemingly perfect dates have aligned with so many other apparent prophetic signs. We thought it would have been a perfect time for the Rapture. Yet we are still here. We're caught in a paradox of emotions that cause those of us who watch, to wait patiently, containing the joy of the prospect of our eternal glorification in Christ.

At this late stage in the game of human history, there are only three kinds of people left not awaiting the return of Jesus Christ: those who know and don't believe, and those that don't know or don't care.

With all the craziness going on in the world, how could anyone not think that this is the last generation? At the very least, can anyone who even remotely keeps up on current events, think that life will continue as is for more than a few decades at the most? Our national debt alone will force a radical realignment in the way our nation and world function.

Many Christians aren't actively looking for the Lord's coming. One reason for this is the resurgence of Amillennialism. Most of Christianity today believes the Church is the true Israel, and all prophetic events are then allegorized or historicized. From that perspective, they deny any biblical significance regarding Israel and the Middle East.

But for those of us who are watching and waiting, our anticipation continues to build with each passing day. As the days and weeks go by, countries go to war, nations collapse into chaos, there are unprecedented natural disasters, and we see the signs stacking up like never before. Most importantly, we also understand the incredible significance of the fact that Israel has retained its identity and re-emerged as a nation despite tremendous odds.

But as the days turn into weeks and the weeks into months, before long, even events like Hurricane Katrina seems like a lifetime ago. So many things are happening in so many different spectrums prophetically, it is like we're becoming desensitized to it all. It's like being in a very noisy restaurant. No matter how loud it gets, you somehow get used to that level of distraction until it all blends into background noise. It's not until we leave there and go outside, that you notice just how loud it was. This is the very thing we should be wary of.

As we move throughout the year, Jewish holy days will start to gain prominence and meaning as the time draws closer. The Feasts of the Lord are: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Weeks, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles. We talk about how significant these events are and how a rapture event could fulfill them prophetically. Jesus literally fulfilled the first three of the seven main Jewish feasts through His death, burial, and resurrection. The Church was born on Pentecost and, given that all the feasts have been fulfilled chronologically and literally, we can have full confidence that the Feast of Trumpets symbolizes the next major event, being the Rapture of the church.

Not to say that the Church is limited to only being raptured during Rosh Hashanah (September-October), but if these events are following some chronological pattern, then that may be the case. But as watchful believers, we have to counter this idea with the issue of imminence, and

that Christ could return at any moment. (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess 1:9-10; 1 Thess 5:4-9; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Titus 2:13; 1 John 3:2-3; Revelation 22:7,12, 20)

In a way, we work ourselves up for the possibility of Christ's return around these specific dates. But when these dates come and go, we allow our hope to get temporarily deflated, as if the Lord let us down somehow. Maybe this is a fleeting moment for some, but for others, it can turn that disappointment into bitterness. Many Preterist have become that way because at some point in the past, they got burned by buying into some teacher/preacher/prophet sell them a load of goods by date-setting Christ's return.

We are as believers, commanded to watch, and be watchful for the Lord's return well over a dozen times in the New Testament, yet this message is increasingly not being echoed from the pulpits of Christian churches. If the return of Christ is preached, then it is falling on increasingly deaf ears and hardened hearts.

So many red lines have come and gone. So many 'point-of-no-return' moments have presumably slipped by without a peep. The world delicately balances on a knives edge, wobbling to and fro and just when things seem to lean a little too much in one direction, it somehow balances itself out. Wars that threaten to ignite World War III seem a whisper away and somehow remain there. Economies that seem to be faltering to the point of no recovery, suddenly recover.

And yet we can see the signs stacking up. We can see countries aligning themselves together politically, economically and militarily in a way they've never done in the past and doing exactly as the Bible predicted. Those of us who take the Bible seriously can see the literal events of Zech 12:3 slowly gathering momentum and taking shape before our very eyes. Who would have thought, so many centuries ago, that a seemingly insignificant nation like Israel would demand such global attention?

We can turn on the news and see the steady downward trend the world is going. There appears to be no indication or possibility of a reversal. The apostasy in Christendom is rising and we can see the evidence manifest itself in the watered down, lukewarm gospel messages on Christian television, books, and in the pulpits. Furthermore, the very nature of Christ's divinity, sin and hell are being challenged by more and more so-called Christian leaders. This is all despite the optimism of the Postmillennialists and Reconstructionists.

Then, on a day when we least expect it, it will happen. We'll wake up in the morning and thank the Lord for the day He's given us. We'll go about our usual routine. We might even think, 'maybe today'. But then the reality of our lives quickly intrudes upon us - we have real bills to pay and real problems to sort out. You know the kind of day I'm talking about. Before you know it, it's dark outside and you sit down to read or maybe catch the news...and bam! The Trumpet sounds and the voice of our Lord calls out to us... "COME UP HERE!"

We know that God has His predetermined timeline and ultimate purpose. His schedule isn't ours. Peter reminds us that God is not willing for any to perish and that the day of the Lord will come as a thief. 2 Pet 3:9-10

As we watch all these worrisome and perplexing events unfold and ebb, we should be encouraged to occupy and witness to the lost while we still have precious time. Our world cannot continue indefinitely under its current course. We live in an age that is an ellipsis of sorts, God's national plan for Israel on hold until our fullness comes to completion (Luke 21:24; Romans 11:25) and we do not know when that moment will come.

In the meantime we must stay alert because...It really could happen today.

"And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" Mark 13:37

The Death of Atheism

Globalism - Ecumenism

Monday, February 27, 2012

Pete Garcia

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.

Proverbs 14:1 NKJV

With the world's most famous atheist publicly confessing that he doesn't know whether God exists or not, an ominous mile-marker can be made about where we are in relation to the last days.

Atheism is seen as increasingly unreasonable in today's marketplace of ideas due to the growing amount of evidence saying otherwise. Even now, an increasing number of people are claiming that they are 'spiritual', which allows them the freedom to remain non-committal about Jesus Christ without completely coming off as obtuse, about the possibility that *something* is out there.

By the way, most people who claim to be atheist are really agnostics trying to sound rational and educated. But in order for one to be a 100% full-fledged atheist, one would have to have an infinite working knowledge of everything in the universe in order to definitively state, that God doesn't exist. And if the world's *smartest* atheist can't make that statement, neither can they.

Think about it this way though; Richard Dawkins recent public confession would be tantamount to theological heavyweight evangelical Pastor John MacArthur, publically stating that he's not entirely sure that there is a God. What would the ramifications of such a statement be within the Christian community?

A century ago, it was relatively easy for men like Friedrich Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell, and Jean-Paul Sartre to make bombastic statements that God didn't exist. They spouted off unsubstantiated claims such as 'God is dead' and religion is the cause of all mankind's problems and millions of people bought into this lie. It helped spawn the existentialist movement, Nihilism, and became the theological backbone for evolutionary science. Atheism shrouded itself in the cloak of academia and science, and definitively helped make the 20th century the bloodiest on record.

Historical sidenote: source

It has been estimated that in less than the past 100 years, governments under the banner of communism have caused the death of somewhere between 40,472,000 to 259,432,000 human lives. Dr. R. J. Rummel, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Hawaii, is the scholar who first coined the term democide (death by government). Dr. R. J. Rummel's mid estimate regarding the loss of life due to communism is that communism caused the death of approximately 110,286,000 people between 1917 and 1987.

And what is the ideology/theology of Communism? Atheism.

Quoting Dinesh D'Souza:

As one writer put it, "Leaders such as Stalin and Mao persecuted religious groups, not in a bid to expand atheism, but as a way of focusing people's hatred on those groups to consolidate their own power." Of course, I agree that murderous regimes, whether Christian or atheist, are generally seeking to strengthen their position. But if Christian regimes are held responsible for their crimes committed in the name of Christianity, then atheist regimes should be held accountable for their crimes committed in the name of atheism. And who can deny that Stalin

and Mao, not to mention Pol Pot and a host of others, all committed atrocities in the name of a Communist ideology that was explicitly atheistic? Who can dispute that they did their bloody deeds by claiming to be establishing a “new man” and a religion-free utopia? These were mass murders performed with atheism as a central part of their ideological inspiration, they were not mass murders done by people who simply happened to be atheist.

But their (men like Nietzsche, Russell, and Sartre) arrogance and ignorance was in large part, due to the lack of archeological, technological, and historical information available to us today. In other words, they put forth untested and untenable philosophical (Will to Power) and scientific theories (Eugenics and Evolution) as truth, which clearly, history has shown us otherwise. We can see how an atheistic philosophy has shaped our recent past:

“When Adolf Hitler first met Benito Mussolini, he presented him with a gift of the collected works of Nietzsche. It was an appropriate memento. Hitler's ideas about life and politics were largely derived from Nietzsche. Hitler subscribed to the Nietzschean idea that superior people have an inborn right to rule.” William Kirkpatrick

Atheism has failed in every society it has been thrust upon and ALWAYS brings about destruction and misery. Why? Because it offers nothing and takes everything. To quote on the abject failure that 70 years of communism had wrought on the Russian people, Nobel Prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn said:

"If I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible that main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: 'Men had forgotten God; that is why all this has happened.'"

We have finally approached an age, when even the most hardened skeptic cannot definitively claim that there is no God. Now, he/she may not believe in the God of the Bible, or in Jesus Christ, but they can't deny the supernatural like they could even a century ago. The supernatural and unexplainable have significantly ramped up since the end of World War II. What was significant about then? Israel became a nation again. Beginning on November 29, 1947, the United Nations Partition Plan went into effect, and ended in May 14, 1948, when Israel declared herself a nation again. What Satan intended for bad through his man Hitler, whose goal was to rid the world of Jews, helped reestablish a united Jewish nation of Israel again after a 2700-year absence.

"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive." John 5:43 NKJV

But things have sped up since then. Technology and apostasy have been on overdrive because now, at this stage in the game, Satan, and his man the Antichrist do not need skeptics...they need believers. What they don't want are Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu, or Atheist fundamentalists. They need people who will be wooed by signs, wonders, and the possibility that they too can become gods. Atheism's usefulness is wearing thin.

At some future point, a powerful delusion will be given, which will overrule man's logic and reason to accept that all the world's problems are somehow connected with Christians, Jews, and the God of the Bible.

This man of the world, the Antichrist will have the solution to the world's economic, geo-political, and religious problems that have plagued mankind since the Tower of Babel. His methods and solutions will prove to be so effective, that they (the world) are willing to worship him and embrace the Dragon in his final attempt at uniting mankind against God. At this point, he (the Antichrist) will not need a bunch of 'free-thinkers'; his needs demand he be worshipped.

I say Richard Dawkins confession is fitting that it should surface now; because it is becoming increasingly more difficult for people to claim that the supernatural doesn't exist.

Taking the God argument aside, too many people have seen or heard the unexplainable: UFOs, ghosts, strange sounds, mass animal deaths, and paranormal activity, to absolutely rule out that there is an existence beyond our realm. Even within science, there is new inventions and technologies that seemed inconceivable even a decade or so ago, yet, are accepted as scientifically feasible today. Atheism is dying off, but don't take my word for it: (Source)

Many antichrists have come, and many have tried to bring the whole world in under their control. They might have even succeeded in controlling large areas, but none have been able to garner global worship on the level that this coming Antichrist will be able to. So as we leave the Age of Information and enter into the Age of Signs and Wonders, the next species facing extinction will be the human atheist. If they will not worship Jesus Christ as Lord now, they will bow to Satan's man the Antichrist during the Tribulation.

Even the title of this article, "The Death of Atheism" might on the surface appear to be bombastic. Certainly, I can't make a statement like that in a vacuum based solely off of Richard Dawkins personal assessment. But according to the Bible, there is coming a day when those left here on earth after the Rapture will all be forced to believe in something.

Speaking of the Antichrist (the Beast), John records:

"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8)

Hook in the Jaw

News From Around the World

Monday, March 05, 2012

Pete Garcia

"Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, "Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords." Ezekiel 38:1-4

Growing up in the 80's, I remember hearing about our super-secret Star Wars program. What it was proposed to do was to effectively neutralize anything the Soviet Union could throw at us by zapping it from outer space with laser beams...at least, that's the way I understood it. In my young impressionable mind, we were invincible, and this program was proof positive.

From the 1950's through the 1980's, the military strategists 'war-gamed' every possible scenario and it seemed like the best option we could come up with was Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). The least likely option that anyone seriously considered, bankrupting their economy with a costly arms race, didn't happen until President Reagan rejected détente and began his Strategic Defense Initiative...aka "Star Wars". So here we are again 30 years later, trying to get the Russians to see reason and get on board the American gravy train, and they just don't seem to want to play ball.

Imagine the outrage amongst the Soviet elite, when they found out 'Star Wars' was really a ruse to bankrupt them into oblivion? Did we think that they would just throw their hands up in the air and laugh about it? Lucky for us, most people back then couldn't afford their own home computers and therefore didn't understand the technical difficulties of such a complicated

system that laughably promised coverage to the continental United States. Despite its failings, the SDI worked, and the Soviet Union collapsed in December of 1991.

On a positive note, a door was opened and for the first time in 70 years, the Gospel had freedom of travel inside Russia.

Initially, there was joy and real hope that an era of peace could emerge. But just like every other nation that has undergone some period of chaos, a powerful political leader always emerges, promising to restore order and fix all the woes. All the Soviet economic meltdown did in the 1990's was allow for a new strongman to emerge amongst the chaos and fiscal rubble and assume control.

Enter Vladimir Putin. He entered into the KGB around 1975 and left the service of the KGB as a colonel right around the time of the Soviet Union's demise in 1991. Upon leaving, he began dabbling in politics in his hometown of Leningrad (St. Petersburg). He went from mayor of St. Petersburg in 1994 to President of Russia in just five short years, pretty impressive for an ambitious young man. But as Putin began to accumulate power and control during his reign, he resuscitated his old KGB ways and began to silence his detractors.

Having lived and served the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War and then having to watch his beloved motherland collapse economically only to get taken over by Mafioso thugs and greedy entrepreneurs, I can only imagine the harboring of some deep-seated resentment toward the United States for the demise of his once glorious Soviet Union.

Having to step down in 2008 from the office of the Presidency due to their Constitutional rules, a popular Vladimir Putin ensured that his young protégé, Dmitry Medvedev, assumed the office of President and in which he would appoint him as Prime Minister. He allowed Dmitry to run the nation for the interim four years until he became eligible to run again, but Vlad's never been far from the camera. Somehow the photographer always gets him in some action shot proving that he's more than just a pretty face.

The Prophetic Perspective

The Battle of Gog and Magog is a war that is just over our horizon, but has been scheduled on God's prophetic calendar now for over 2500 years. In this war, the Russians, Iranians, Turks, Libyans, and descendants of the Cushite peoples, will come against Israel. To date, this particular alliance of nations has never occurred in history. As it is in acting, people are asking...*what is Russia's motivation in this? How are they dragged into this?*

I think part of the reason they are involved, is for financial retribution, as Israel becomes the main source of reliable energy (natural gas) to the European and Mediterranean Unions. Another reason is because they destroyed Damascus and sacked Iran's nuclear facilities in which the Russians have invested a lot of time and energy in.

Nationally, the Russian political structure is atheistic. Technically, the Greek Orthodox Church is the national religion, but it is merely window dressing. To the former Communistic Russian leadership, religion is a useful tool that is to be manipulated in order to consolidate power and wield control over the masses. Once the true Church is removed from within their borders, like everywhere else, mankind will not be restrained by any moral or ethical inhibitions and taking out Israel once and for all will seem like the most logical strategic move. It is in their minds, a strategic chess move that once made, will set them up as the premier powerhouse on the planet.

I think it's a little ironical that so much effort and energy is put into to trying to win the Russians over to our side. The State Department is seemingly in a perpetual state of denial when the Russians side with brutal, ruthless regimes over our muddled global agendas. It's not complicated and it's not that the Russians prefer leaders like Kim Jong Il, Basher Assad, or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to non-tyrants. We just fail to recognize the level of loathing in which

they have towards the United States. They want to see the US collapse like they did. They want the US to suffer the same fate they did and be the laughingstock of the world as they were. They're not worried about two-bit thugs like Kim or Mahmoud, because when push comes to shove, they will slap the iron-fist down on them without a second thought.

That's why they will continue to support whoever stands against us via proxy. They will fund and train a tyrannical Islamic theocracy's nuclear weapons program even when it goes against their own best interests because they know we oppose it. They will do this to watch America jump from hotspot to hotspot putting out fires as the global policeman; all the while as it demoralizes our military ranks and bankrupts us financially. They are watching with much delight as the US finds itself embroiled in the same quagmire, they found themselves in back in the 1980's when they invaded Afghanistan.

And the Hook is the varied diplomatic, economic, and militaristic agreements Russia has with those nations that oppose the US, which simultaneously locks them into the same trajectory of those nations who hate Israel.

If it wasn't for their leaderships utter despise of the US, I don't think they would be in lock step with nations like Iran, Syria, and North Korea. They wouldn't continually put themselves at odds against our interests worldwide. But now, the spider-web they themselves spun over 70 years has caught them and has turned the predator into the prey.

"Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes.

"And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord." **Ezekiel 38:15-16, 22-23**

The Tale of Two Churches

Prophecy - Signs

Monday, March 12, 2012

Pete Garcia

The Book of Revelation chronicles the history of the church and the times to come after the age of the church has ended.

The Book borrows heavily from the Old Testament, particularly, from chapters 4 onward. This is done for a particular reason, so that one who is well versed in only the Old Testament could easily understand the symbolism that the Apostle John conveys here.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, written in 95 AD, placed at the end of all the other New Testament gospels and epistles, has remained hidden to non-Christians because of its heavy reliance on symbolism. This is significant and done purposefully to reach a particular audience.

When reading the book of Revelation, you read in chapter 1 that John is told to write the things which he has seen, the things which are, and the things which would come thereafter. John then hears and sees 'One like the Son of Man' and notices that He was walking in the midst of seven golden lampstands. We come to find out that the lampstands represent seven churches in which Jesus instructs John to copy down the dictation He is about to give.

Chapters 2 and 3 therefore are the Seven Letters Jesus speaks to the Seven Churches. They were real churches, with real people and real issues. They could be applied to any church from any age, because churches are still populated with humans, and we humans still suffer from the same sort of failings. But what is unique about these letters is the particular order they are addressed in. Add to the fact that only seven letters were given, when there were hundreds of churches (some larger and better known) by 95AD. Jesus has some very specific things to say to each church and when looking at them chronologically, we have come to see that they would also speak to the specific ages/eras that the church would go through within these last 2,000 years of Christendom.

Each church still exists in some form or fashion, whether it is as the individual believer or to the congregation. There are still churches like the persecuted church in Smyrna in many parts of the world today. There are still churches that have left their first love like the church in Ephesus. The church in Thyatira most resembles the Roman Catholic Church in its secrets, heresies, and traditions. Although she (the RCC) doesn't command the same legal and political authority she once held over kings and kingdoms, the RCC will rise once again on the back of the revived Roman Empire.

The Protestant church, which most resembles the church in Sardis, thought they were alive, but were really dead (spiritually). When the Reformation liberated millions from legalism, their congregations only thrived for a short time before smoldering into the Age of Reason, because they continued in the same dead eschatological beliefs as the RCC. At least with the RCC, you had the beauty in its ritualism and aestheticism. But today, the mainstream denominations resemble that 'dead' remark more than they care to admit, with their church attendance rolls plummeting faster than the Greek stock market.

But it is to the last two letters that I would like you, the reader, to hone in on. To the church in Philadelphia, Christ had nothing but praise for. To the church in Laodicea, Christ had nothing positive to say. Let's look back at Matthew's Gospel for a moment as we pick up on something that Jesus once spoke about. When Jesus asked His disciples who men said He was, they answered:

"Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Matthew 16:14

Jesus then pointedly asks Peter, "Who do *you* say that I am?" In which Peter rightly answers... "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (vs. 16)

Then, in this most often misunderstood verse, Jesus responds:

"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:13-19

The Church would be built upon Peter's confession of who Christ is, not on Peter himself as the Roman Catholics would have you believe. After all, the entire discussion is about who Christ is, not about how great Peter was for recognizing that.

Fast Forward

We live in a world today that is increasingly antagonistic towards the Gospel, so much so, that any church or believer, who is not firmly rooted in the firm foundation of Jesus Christ, is buckling under the pressure the world has placed upon them. Believers who hold to the views of: salvation by grace through faith, inerrancy of Scripture, Triune nature of God, Deity of Jesus

Christ, and the exclusivity of Salvation through Jesus Christ alone...are becoming increasingly smaller in number.

Christianity has all but been purged from the public arena of ideas, and anyone who dares mention discussion about Creationism for example, are immediately discredited and blacklisted. Anyone who dares speak their mind about the truth of Mormonism or Islam, are immediately labeled as a bigot.

If a pastor preaches that abortion or gay marriage is abhorrent, protesters will disrupt their services and protest outside their doors until either the law is forced to intervene, or that pastor publicly recants. Even a man such as the Franklin Graham, who called into question the President's Christianity (or lack thereof), had to publicly recant because of the pressure brought upon him.

These two churches, Philadelphia and Laodicea, have existed side by side in the last days. Philadelphia has little strength because the world is attempting to snuff the life out of it. Laodicea preaches everything and anything, **but** Christ crucified. They are rich, ecumenical and emergent, preaching a social gospel that is palpable to all, so as not to offend anyone. They promote the word-faith message, and the prosperity gospel. They are also seeker-friendly, and purpose driven. Philadelphians take a stand and are marginalized and mocked. They are attacked as obtuse, antiquated, and irrelevant. Laodicea refuses to make waves and is praised for their 'tolerance' and left alone to spread their infectious apostasy.

Although the Laodicean church takes up the last spot on the list of churches, it is not the last Church. They are what is left over. Christ said He would build His church, and the 'gates of Hades' would not prevail against it. How could Christ build His church and then subsequently be stuck on the outside knocking on the door? You cannot be a true Christian, and not be in Christ, or He in you. How could Jesus build a church that He seemingly only wants to vomit out of His mouth because they have become so lukewarm and self-aggrandizing?

The Philadelphian church is really the last church in which Christ is building, and it is **this** church the gates of Hades will not prevail against. They exist in a time, much like Smyrna, yet suffer a different form of persecution, but persecution, nonetheless. (2 Peter 3:3-9, 2 Timothy 3:1-9) Look at how much more vitriolic and hateful the world has become in just these last ten years here in the West. And so it is today, where the world is becoming almost unbearably hostile to the Christian, it almost seems as if the dam of evil is on the verge of breaking and sweeping over the Church. But it only **seems** that way, because Christ has promised the Philadelphian church something wonderful instead...

"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. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." Revelation 3:10-11

Operation 10/40

War News

Tuesday, March 20, 2012

Pete Garcia

Having spent two years of my adult life embedded in the Middle East "sharing our culture" with the Iraqis and the Afghanis, I feel like I can speak firsthand about our foreign policy experiment with a high degree of clarity that a lot of our pundits and politicians seem to not grasp.

Keep in mind now, this is neither a chastisement nor a condemnation, but rather an honest observation about what we are doing (or not doing) in that particular area of the world to make the world a better place.

I read an article during my 2008 Afghanistan tour that profoundly changed my opinion about our chances for success over there. The article was written by a retired four-star Marine General, who for the life of me, I can't remember, nor had any success in finding the article. But the gist of it was if we really want to affect meaningful change in Afghanistan, we would need to commit hundreds of thousands of troops, over a 30-40 year window. In other words, it would take a whole generation to die off before the new generation could make things turn around for the better. From a completely secular standpoint, he might be on to something.

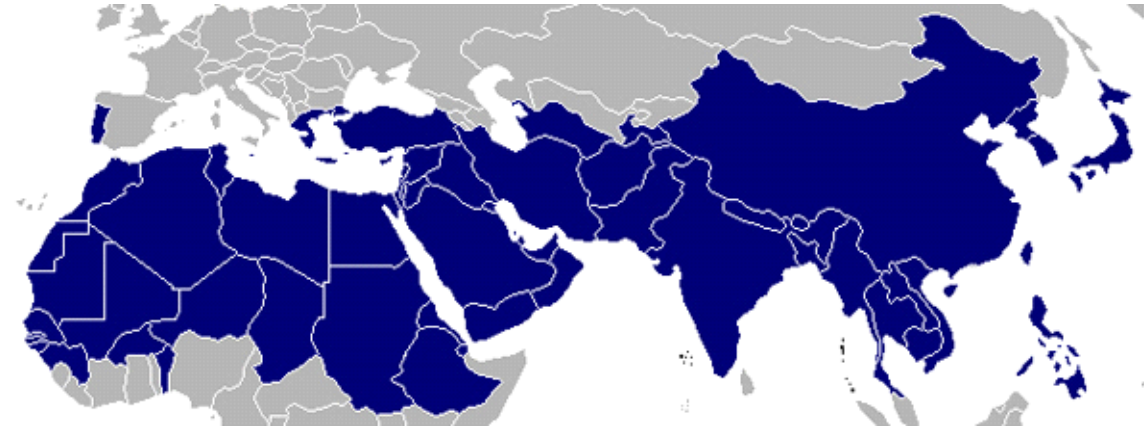
But, it made a lot of sense to me, considering I had studied the history of Afghanistan long before I ever went over there. Alexander the Great, the Mongols, the British, and the Russians all failed to affect change, although they were the superior powers in their respective days. In fact, the only thing that was able to sweep in there and really make a difference (for the worse unfortunately) was the spread of Islam. The other day, I was reading a Cal Thomas article called 'Leave Afghanistan Now' and at the bottom of the article, was a single comment that just blew me away. It's what I've always known to be the truth, but have never been able to say as succinctly or as eloquently in my innumerable conversations about it, as this person has.

"So then, the predictions that historians made at the beginning of this conflict have been proven right. Afghan has never been held long by any superpower. The armies of Alexander, the massacres of the Mongols, the might of Britain and the technology of the Soviet Union have all failed to hold the country. They are a fiercely independent people, valuing individual freedom above security. The only conquest that was successful was a religious one of Islam. It is Christianity, not Western culture, which is the answer to the chaos of Afghanistan. The biggest tactical mistake that the US army may have made was to burn a shipment of Afghan Bibles." (Phos)

Is it just me, or is that so blindingly spot on, that it should be taught in our War College as Doctrine? Think about it...all these mighty powers have come and gone in this rugged nation of proud tribal clans, and to date, not been able to do what the cult of Islam has done? We here in the West (and that is a collective 'We'), seem to think that Afghanistan has always been Islamic, or are we willingly ignoring the historical fact of how Islam spread? It sure wasn't spread by going door to door and handing out pamphlets. It was spread by the Sword of Allah, and from the middle of the Seventh century on, it's been marching east and west taking millions into a system of brutal bondage the likes the world has never seen.

But in Afghanistan, there were primitive and rugged tribal groups, who only quit fighting each other when an outsider came in, in which they joined forces and turned on the outsiders. Adding a brutal, repressive system like Islam on top of an already primitive culture, and you have gasoline on dry kindling. Is it any wonder why there is no negotiating with them? Is there any wondering why they riot and kill each other at a whim, because of a supposed offence at a book (Koran) most of them can't even read? We westerners think that by holding "Shura's" and

drinking tea with them will build some kind of rapport, but we're only fooling ourselves, because they know better. They'll only negotiate on what benefits them, not the other way around.



Luis Bush, a Christian Strategist Activist, was the first to coin the phrase, the 10/40 window. Basically, it's the eastern region of the world that falls in between the 10-40 degrees north of the equator. Looking at the map, one is almost immediately recognizes this as the single greatest area outside the influence of Christianity. It is home to Islam, Hinduism, Shinto's, Buddhism, Confucianism, and many other non-Christian belief systems. It is also wracked with war, disease, and poverty far greater than anywhere else on the planet. So why is that?

Biblical Perspective

"Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince)." (Daniel 10:20-21 NIV)

In reading this, one can infer that within the Angelic realms, there are hierarchical structures that we are only given small glimpses of. And what two nations sit right in the middle of this 10/40 window? Persia and Ancient Babylon. It is my understanding, that Angels, whether fallen or not, do not inhabit time like you and I do, and should be understood that they (these princes of Persia and Greece) are still alive and well on planet earth. It certainly explains a lot when you understand that demonic strongholds still exist, and still sway nations and leaders like Stalin, Pol Pot, Mao Tse Tung, Saddam Hussein, Ayatollah Khomeini, and the Kim's in North Korea.

If you look at big picture, Christianity began to spread from Jerusalem outward. Before even the thought *Islam* came into little Mohammed's mind; Syria, Egypt and Turkey were predominantly Christian nations. Modern day Yemen was at one time, a Jewish Himyarite kingdom while most of Europe was still tromping around in the mud in Barbarian clans.

Islam, founded by an illiterate son of a trader, travelled with his familial clan on trade routes and picked up bits and pieces from different belief systems along the way. That is why there are biblical characters in Islam. That's why there is the idea of 72 virgins from Zoroastrianism (Persian) beliefs in Islam. That's why there is heavy Arab pagan symbolism (crescent moon) in Islam. Islam is a conglomerate of all the different belief systems with a sword. There is no peace with Islam, and it doesn't matter how good we train their armies or what politician we put in power there, you can't negotiate with demonic theology. But if you want a full in depth debriefing on the last 1400 years of Islam, go here.

So, we liberated the Iraqis, we got rid of Saddam and his two thug sons and got the purple fingers of victory elections. The Iraqis, predictably, elected along religious and ethnic lines, and

now have a fractured and dysfunctional government accusing each other of aiding the insurgency and the Iranians. Muqtada al Sadr's forces are backed by the Iranians vying for power against the Sunnis, both of which are trying to get a piece of the Kurdish oil money. I wonder if that was what President Bush meant by "spreading democracy?"

The one thing we could have done to really affect change there, in either place, we shunned because of our own political correctness. How did the United States and later Europe come to have stable, open, and democratic societies? How democratic was Europe under the: Barbarians, Kings, and the Roman Catholic Church? How democratic were the Russians under the Czars and Bolsheviks?

We (collective we) are so sheepish when it comes to doing what needs to be done. We'll do everything BUT the right thing, hoping against hope that fate will somehow blow us some good fortune. They say..."we can't go imposing our values on them!" WHY NOT? Those unfortunate Afghans centuries ago, who under pain of death, were converted to Islam would probably think otherwise.

How can we claim to liberate peoples from dictators, yet leave them oppressed under such an OBVIOUS system that advocates raping children, keeping women uneducated and buried under head-to-toe burqas, and prevents anyone from ever leaving that religion or face stoning or beheading? We get rid of one bad guy, and ten more pop up in his place. What does that tell you? It tells me, that unless you change their thinking about life and death, there will never be enough young American men and women to send over there that will make one bit of difference the millisecond we leave.

If you want to win and spread democracy in this area of the world known as 10/40, you better come armed with something stronger than cruise missile, because the mightiest armies in the world cannot fight against spiritual strongholds, no matter how powerful our guns might be.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:10-13

Kirchenkampf

Globalism - Ecumenism

Tuesday, March 27, 2012

Pete Garcia

Looking back at recent history, we can see one of the most blatant and ludicrous attempts at replacing Jesus with another, man-made 'Jesus'. The Third Reich in the 1920's and 30's did this when they were rising to power. Their "Positive Christianity" sought to 'Aryanize' Jesus as a Galilean (who by their definition weren't Jewish). Literally, they tried to remove the Jewishness of both Jesus and the scriptures from the Bible.

As I was doing some research on Christian persecution over the last few hundred years, I noticed that I kept seeing the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons included in the list of persecuted Christian groups. I understand that Mormons and JW's have been persecuted by various regimes over the years but being lumped in with Orthodox groups as if they were one in the same troubled me. To many outside of the Christian faith, both JW's and LDS are grouped together with Christians, even though by definition, they are not anymore Christian, than a Muslim is a Hindu.

They cannot be Christian because they deny or alter some of the very basic tenets that make Christianity unique. It makes as much sense as saying one was a Muslim but denying the basic tenets of Islam.

From Wikipedia:

Positive Christianity grew out of the Higher Criticism of the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on the distinction between the historical Jesus, and the divine Jesus of theology. According to some schools of thought, the savior-figure of orthodox Christianity was very different from the historical Galilean preacher. While many such scholars sought to place Jesus in the context of ancient Judaism, some writers **reconstructed** a historical Jesus who corresponded to anti-Semitic ideology. In the writings of such anti-Semites as Emile Burnouf, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Paul de Lagarde, **Jesus was redefined** as an Aryan hero who struggled against Judaism. Consistent with their origins in Higher Criticism, such writers often either **rejected or minimized** the miraculous aspects of Gospel narratives, reducing the crucifixion to a tragic coda to Jesus's life rather than its prefigured culmination.

The three main tenets of Positive Christianity were:

1. Rejection of Jewish-written parts of the Bible (including the entire Old Testament)
2. Claiming "Aryan hood" and non-Jewishness for Christ
3. The political objective of national unity, to overcome confessional differences, to eliminate Catholicism, and to unite Protestantism into a single unitary Christian national socialist church

First of all, in order for the Nazi's to use Christianity, they had to deny what makes Christianity unique. Christianity has its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures and accepts Jesus as a Jewish Messiah. Whereas many unorthodox groups attempt at changing the mechanism of Salvation (ie...through good works or ritualism), they attempted to deny the actual ethnicity and/or personhood of Jesus Christ. Ethnically speaking, He was Jewish, not Aryan, Arabian, Persian, Asian, Anglo-Saxon, or any other modern day rebranding. And He certainly wasn't Palestinian (as the name Palestine wouldn't even be used for another 100 years!)

Secondly, they attempted to unite Christians, not under Jesus Christ, but under the State. Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church attempts to unite all believers within Christendom under the control of the papacy. When people are prompted to unite under any other person, institution, or system outside of the biblical personhood of Jesus Christ, it is apostate and doomed to failure. It doesn't matter if it is Charles Taze Russell, Joseph Smith, the Pope, the Motherland, or Adolph Hitler.

The term 'Kirchenkampf' in German means the 'struggle of the church'. Historians are divided somewhat on exactly how this played out, but there was an attempt by the Nazis to squash evangelical and orthodox Christian churches with the state-ran Nazi propaganda church.

The Kirchenkampf can be divided into five stages (Source)

First (spring to fall 1933):

- Hitler makes efforts to assimilate the churches into the culture of National Socialism.
- The Reichskonkordat was an outcome of this stage.
- The preparation to create a unified single Reichskirche from the 28 regional Protestant churches, the Ludwig Müller controversy, and the beginning of the rise of the Confessing Church.

Second (fall 1933 – fall 1934)

- The regime attempted to bring the churches under the control of the Nazi state.
- Opposition to these efforts led to the emergence of the Confessing Church.
- The regime breaches various portions of the Concordat.

Third (fall 1934 – February 1937)

- The regime tried to bring the Protestant churches under its control by taking charge of church finances and governance structures.

Fourth (February 1937 – 1939)

- More open conflict based on "Nazism itself and its anti-Christian worldviews".
- The regime increased its imprisonment of resistant clergy, such as Martin Niemöller.

Fifth stage (1939–1945)

- More clergy were imprisoned
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned and executed
- Clergy were drafted into the military
- Church publications were censored or banned
- Services and functions restricted or banned

Source: Lueker, Erwin L.; Luther Poellot, Paul Jackson (2000). "Kirchenkampf". Christian Encyclopedia. Concordia Publishing House. Retrieved 2008-03-09

Do any of the above stages seem eerily similar to what we see going on in the United States today?

Sign of the Times

"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'"

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many." (Matthew 24:3-5)

Jesus warned us that many would come in His Name, and would deceive many. I used what the Nazis did as a fairly blatant attempt at denying the historical truth of who Jesus was for an example for us today. (Although, Bill Maher seems more inline with the Nazi revision than others)

But even though that twice-dead tree was hewn down, the roots of 'Higher Criticism' were left intact, and once again have begun to sprout new life into a heretically damning theology. This time around, it is subtler and seeks to do the very thing that Satan said to Eve in the Garden when first tempting her:

"Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1)

At the outset, I mentioned Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses as non-orthodox groups lumped in with Christian groups. Originally, these groups broke away from mainstream Christianity as the only 'real' believers who had the NEW revelation from God. If you didn't belong to them and follow their rules, you were doomed. So why now, are they now actively seeking to be included in the groups they once denounced as Apostate?

"Nothing less than a complete apostasy from the Christian religion would warrant the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."- *Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., History of the Church, v. 1, p. xl*

Why are Hindu's now claiming Jesus was really an enlightened guru, who may or may not have been Jewish incarnate of the Krishna?

"Was Jesus a Hindu or was he a Buddhist? Let us avoid these labels. Jesus was surely a divine person who belonged to the whole world and the whole human race. Let us listen to his message of love and adopt it in our lives without getting involved in such debates that would lead us nowhere. Let us always remember Jesus as a Son of God who brought to us the message of love.

Time has come to liberate Jesus from churches, theologians and clergy. Let us spread His message of selfless love. Modern world needs peace that can come only from love and not from wars. Today's world needs Jesus more than ever before." *Anil Chawla*

As the last of the last days approaches, there will be an onslaught from every conceivable direction that will seek to keep the sinner from Christ, and the Christian from living their Christianity. There is power in the name of Jesus Christ. There is power in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is power in the truth of the Scriptures. Power, that has for thousands of years, set men and women free eternally. It is the liberation of men and women under the bondage of a sin curse that draws people to Christ. When you remove any component of either the humanity of Christ, or His Deity, you have another 'Jesus'. Whether you cloak your re-visioning in the name of the National Socialists movement, political correctness, some new revelation, or coopting into another religion, you don't have the Jesus of the Bible, King of Kings, Lord of Lords...but just another man named Jesus who can't save you, because he never existed.

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." Jude 3-4

Come Undone

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, April 03, 2012

Pete Garcia

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

To be perfectly honest, I have dreaded writing this for a long time now. I'm not all that comfortable talking about myself, especially when it is on this subject. For me, it is easy to write about current geo-political events or the prophetic signposts we see flying by us at 80 mph. But at the end of the day, I lay my head down on my pillow and come clean with God.

What have I done today in the service of my King? What opportunities did I squander in sharing the Gospel or what kind word or deed did I withhold from someone in whom God put in my path?

And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory! "And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

A while back I shared with some on the forums of how God got ahold of my life. I was already a Christian, but one who had drifted far from God. I was a 'Jonah' on my way to Tarshish. And then one night, a friend of mine decided to end his own life. When I found out, it was as if a 500 lb. gorilla punched me dead in the chest. It shook me to the core. Based on the evidence that I knew of my friend's life, I seriously doubt he knew Jesus Christ and I shudder to think of where he is right at this moment, and where he will spend all of eternity.

So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone!
Because I am a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The Lord of hosts."

I earnestly believe that we are seeing an increasing number of judgments upon this world as God, in His mercy, tries to wake mankind up. As God already knows how this will transpire, these increased natural and man-made catastrophes are for *our* benefit, not His.

Again, I think back to the tragedy of my friend, and if he hadn't done what he did, would I be where I am today? I shudder to think of what God would have had to do beyond that to get my attention.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."

When tragedy strikes, people are removed suddenly from their comfort zones. And whether it is a tornado, earthquake, flood, fire, suicide, murder, or illness...an infinite and omniscient God uses all these, to work for not only His glory, but for our good. We can question that or try to insert our human reasoning into the "whys" and "what ifs", but the truth is, God has already seen how this plays out. And if He allows this to happen in our lives, and we survive it, we had better recognize that it could have been us, and act upon that knowledge rather than shrugging it off and retreating back to our zones of comfort.

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send,
And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

When I look back on my life, I am according to the world's standards, living a fairly normal life. I went to public school growing up, I went to church, and I joined the military at a young age. Eventually, I went back to college and got a degree, because the world says that is what you have to do to succeed these days. And if the world were judging me based on my résumé, I'd probably be considered a good person with a great track record. But I KNOW better. I know me. I know the people I've hurt and used over the years. I know all the mean things I've said and done, EVEN as a Christian. I know that at my core, were it not for God's providential rescue of myself, I may have been used as an example to someone else. And God used the loss of my dear friend's life, as utterly tragic and preventable as it was, for something good.

And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed." (Isaiah 6:1-10 NKJV)

I don't think God allowed my friend to end his life solely to bring me back into the fold. I think God allowed the circumstances to be as such, so that when it happened, that one facet of this tragedy would be used to bring me back into fellowship with Him. I would have never been part of Omega Letter had those events in my life not transpired the way they did, because I don't think I would have been even interested in getting my life back in step with God. Looking back, I know that I had become very desensitized to the things of God, and it would take the loss of someone close to me, of that magnitude, to wake me up.

So as much as I have been able to, I have sought after God these last 4 ½ years with a passion and a zeal, that most of my old friends probably think I've went off the deep end. I'm a "Jesus-Freak" or a "fanatic", and I've probably turned away some people by my insistence on sharing the Good News with them.

Maybe some see me as a hypocrite, because they knew how I used to be. Honestly, I don't even worry about such things anymore. God has called me to do my part in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ before time runs out, and that's exactly what I will do.

And such is men like the Prophets of old, who were called. Each of us who have come into the Body of Christ, likewise, are called. We have a task and a purpose that we specifically were chosen for. We were chosen to live in these last days to continue to be a beacon of hope for a hopeless world. When we lay aside that calling to enjoy the pleasures of this oh so brief life, our surroundings start to crumble.

Compared to eternity, this life is but a whisper...a speck on the timeline that stretches forever in both directions. 100 million years from now, we will still be in the glorious presence of God, with an everlasting eternity still stretched out before us.

Let us put in proper perspective the priorities between this life, and the one to come. If you live for eternity, your current situation, whatever it may be, will fall exactly in the place God had intended before the world was even created.

Remove the thought from your mind of expecting God to come to force you or to plead with you. When our Lord called His disciples, He did it without irresistible pressure from the outside. The quiet, yet passionate, insistence of His "Follow Me" was spoken to men whose every sense was receptive (Matthew 4:19). If we will allow the Holy Spirit to bring us face to face with God, we too will hear what Isaiah heard—"the voice of the Lord." In perfect freedom we too will say, "Here am I! Send me." Oswald Chambers

The Watchman and the Wall

In Defense of the Faith

Tuesday, April 10, 2012

Pete Garcia

Ever had one of those conversations about the last days where it ends with the other believer saying, "I don't worry about that kind of stuff, I just know it will all pan out in the end?" My all time favorite is when a clergyman tells me that he doesn't preach on it, because it's 'too divisive'.

Yet, these same churches that won't preach the prophetic word for fear of 'division', will break fellowship over the color of the carpet or whether they take communion once a week or once a quarter. I don't know about you, but it breaks my heart to see the state of the modern day church.

Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44 NKJV)

The church today, like the Israel in Jesus' day had gone a long time since anything miraculous or spectacular had happened. It had been 400 years since the last prophet, and there was seemingly a silence from God for that whole period of time. In reality, we can see that God wasn't silent at all, but was allowing 483 years of Daniel's Seventy Weeks to play out. And when Israel's Messiah did come at the appointed time, the people weren't ready.

For us, 2,000 years has passed since that Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given. God has not been silent these last two millennia, but is allowing the fulfillment of the chronology of the Seven Letters to unfold just like the Scriptures said they would. When our Savior comes for His Church, will Christians today be ready?

...Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

Today's mainline churches continue to preach the same old material over and over, month after month, and year after year. They refuse to get anywhere near the prophetic word, and by doing so, ignore over 25% of their Bibles. In their thinking, prophecy has been relegated to fringe groups who march on the sidewalks wearing 'REPENT: THE END IS NEAR' sandwich boards. Maligned and diminished, the Pre-Millennial believer often has to resort to alternative fellowships outside the confines of their church building to even find camaraderie amongst the brethren.

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." Revelation 3:11 NKJV

In Paul's two epistles to the fledgling church in Thessalonica, he lays out the 'mystery' (musterion: Greek) of the Rapture (harpazo: Greek) of the Church.

Many scholars believe that 1st Thessalonians was the first epistle ever written to the newly formed body of believers known as the Church. Likewise, it is also the first epistle to introduce the doctrine of the Rapture in any kind of detail. The 'Rapture' is not a Johnny-come-lately idea; it's been around since Jesus first discussed it in the Upper Room discourse.

2nd Thessalonians was specifically written to counter false teaching that had been snuck into that church in letterform, as if it had come from the Apostles. It said that those Thessalonian believers were already in the Tribulation. Paul condemns those who promoted this false doctrine in chapter one, and then goes into great detail in chapter two explaining the chain of

events that would have to transpire BEFORE the Tribulation could begin. Notice how Paul ends these two jam-packed eschatological epistles:

"But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother."

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15 NKJV

The modern-day religious authorities of both the Protestant and Catholic flavors by and large have rejected the idea that Christ is returning for His Church and that He is coming to establish a literal 1,000-year Messianic kingdom here on earth after the Tribulation.

Instead, they come at you cloaked in religiosity with reasonable sounding reproaches attempting to silence you with shame for taking the Bible so literally. They lump all believers who hold to a Pre-Tribulation Rapture, in the same group as those who followed Harold Camping and William Miller. These clergy plant their battle flags behind grossly misconstrued scriptures and wave their Master of Divinity degrees around as if it were some sort of magical decree from God to interpret the Bible however, they see fit.

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

1 Peter 1:19-21 NKJV

They trade the literal for the allegorical in such a free and easy manner, as if the Bible were no more literal or understandable than a Dr. Seuss book. For them, we are but one more generation in a long series of generations to come. They want to go to Heaven, and may even be going themselves, but they have zero interest in knowing the how or the why. Notice how Jesus address's the religious authorities of His day:

He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.'

Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. Matthew 16:2-3 NKJV

They're too busy trying to fix this fallen and doomed world system with their social gospel propaganda, church expansion committees, and seeker-sensitive training programs to realize how late the hour truly is.

It seems very odd to me considering that even if the Lord tarried, how little time we actually spend in this life that they should be so consumed with the here and now. (Psalm 90:10) The overwhelming bulk of our existence will be spent in eternity. They are too busy getting their "best life now" to think about the eternal life that is to come. These man-centric programs will be forgotten the millisecond we take our last breath.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus joins two disciples walking and talking in a somber mood. I'm paraphrasing here but He says: "What's up guys, why the sad faces?" They said, "Dude, where have you been? Don't you know what's just happened in Jerusalem? So, they retell the story of the crucifixion and how the women visited the tomb on the third day and found it empty but did report seeing angels that told them He was alive. They went themselves but didn't see anything but the empty tomb. This conversation follows:

Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24:25-27

Obviously, Jesus took the numerous prophecies concerning His first coming literally. He believed them because He fulfilled them. Consider this then...for every verse concerning Christ's first coming in the Old Testament, there are three that speak to His second coming. So why shouldn't we take the ones concerning His second coming any less literal?

I once met a brother who I have no doubt, loved Jesus. I told him I was going to lead a bible study through the book of Revelation, and he gave me the strangest look, as if I just told him I was going to sacrifice some baby goats or something. He then proceeded to tell me he didn't read that book because he wanted to stay focused on Jesus, not prophetic symbolism that no one could understand. I shouldn't have been shocked, but I was and had I more of my wits about me, I would have pointed him to Revelation 19:10.

"...For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

After we parted ways, I must admit I slowly became angry the more I considered our theological exchange. Righteous anger or not, I prayed for him and believers like him who are somehow partially blinded by their theological upbringing. I began to picture a scene where the 'watchman on the wall' is on the wall, looking out at over the horizon and can see by the prophetic word, the evil that is coming to our generation like a tsunami. Those inside the walls are safe in Christ, and those outside the walls are not.

The watchman is trying to warn those on the outside to come in before it's too late. Those outside mostly ignore the warning, but a few do come. Ironically, the scoffing isn't coming from without, but from within. The "learned experts" are pointing and laughing at him as if he were some kind of embarrassment to their social standing. Yet, they sense no impending threat nor do they recognize the signs of the times. Not only are they not on the wall, but also refuse to come up to see if what the Watchman says is true. Oblivious to what has been made plainly clear by our Holy Bible, they would rather harmonize their humanistic work propping up a world in collapse, which is about to come to an abrupt end. Like rearranging the deck furniture on the Titanic, theirs is truly an exercise in futility.

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." Revelation 22:12:13 NKJV

The Rapture

Prophecy - Signs

Tuesday, April 17, 2012

Pete Garcia

Over the years, I've read close to a thousand articles pertaining to the Rapture of the Church. I've watched hundreds of videos of speakers expound on this topic. I don't know where to begin on how many sermons I've listened too...and to many of those teachers and preachers...we (those of us who benefit from their diligence) are indebted.

God has blessed many Godly men in putting to terms things many of us have missed or maybe not understood. And just when I thought I'd heard them all, God reveals something new about this subject to me.

The Dead in Christ

First, the Rapture must be distinguished from the gathering by the Angels in Matthew 24:31. Here in Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica, Christ Himself descends in the same manner in which He ascended (Acts 1:9-11) and gathers the Church unto Himself...He doesn't have angels do this for His Bride.

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the **voice of an archangel**, and with the **trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

A Shout: The three times that the New Testament records Jesus shouting or raising His voice in the New Testament, notice what happens: John 11:43 (One man, Lazarus resurrected); Matthew 27:46, 52 (Christ gives up the Ghost, many tombs opened and the dead saints resurrected); 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (millions resurrected)

Voice of an Archangel: Daniel 10:21, 12:1; Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7 refer to a powerful Archangel named Michael. In Daniel 12:1, Daniel is told... "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people;"

Since Scripture has mentioned that there are fallen angels who hold their demonic sway over places on this planet (ie...prince of Persia and Grecia), there are also angelic ones.

Michael the Archangel, the most powerful angel, stands guard over Israel. Scriptures do not say that he has done so these last 2,000 years, but at God's command, he stands his post over the tiny nation. This is just some holy speculation on my part, but at the Rapture, as the Church goes up, Michael's announcement that is shouted from the Heavens, could be to the nation Israel that Daniel's 70th week is about to begin. Or, it could be as Clarence Larkin has suggested, similar to when Michael and Satan contended over the body of Moses (Jude 1:9)...a command to the heavenly armies to keep the enemy at bay while the Rapture transpires.

According to Paul, Satan is the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:1-3) and as would be the case, we would be transitioning right through the heart of enemy territory.

Trumpet of God: We can see in Exodus 19:16-20, that the Israelites were assembled for the first time as a nation as Moses goes up the smoking, trembling mountain. In Leviticus 23:23-25, Moses is explaining the Feast of Trumpets, which would begin on the first day of the seventh month. With the first three feasts literally fulfilled in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the remaining four feasts in the prophetic calendar are waiting, yet to be fulfilled. In Numbers 10:1-8, two trumpet blasts meant its time for the Israelites to pick up and move.

When our Trumpet blasts, it will be time for us to leave and head home. I can't help but think that the Rapture will not only signal it's time for the Church of all ages, being called to move out of this world, being assembled in the sky, for the purpose of entering into our Sabbath, which is Jesus Christ.

The Living Saints

*"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we **shall all** be changed-in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." **1 Corinthians 15:51-54***

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, the 'harpazo' primarily deals with answering the troubling question about what happened to those brothers and sisters in Christ who had passed away. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he primarily deals with the instantaneous transformation of the living. We in our fleshly tents cannot enter heaven; our bodies could not survive it. We have to be transformed into our glorified bodies. In fact, instead of using the letter to comfort one another, Paul ends this Corinthians letter an almost exuberant declaration...."Death is swallowed up in victory." This also puts away the partial Rapture or multi-Rapture theories in that when this happens, it happens to ALL believers.

The Magnet

*"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and **receive** you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." **John 14:1-3***

A magnet works in a loop, with the magnetic field (electrons) constantly flowing out of the north pole and into the south pole. It is amazing to watch a decent size magnet being hung over a pile of nails and watch them get yanked up to meet the magnet. A compass needle is a free-floating magnet, and will at every turn, point to magnetic north.

In a way, I think that our sealing by the Holy Spirit has something to do with this. Our spiritual compass will always point us to God, no matter which way we try to turn. We may continue on the wrong path, but the needle doesn't lie. When Christ stated that He would 'receive us unto Himself', we are made of the same Spiritual material through the Holy Spirit, being caught up as those nails are to an irresistible magnet that draws us unto Himself. When that Shout, Voice, and Trumpet call out to us believers (alive and dead), we will be snatched up to meet the Lord in the air.

As we await the return of our Lord and Savior, think about how God longs to once again walk amongst His people, as it was in the cool of the day in the garden. Then, consider the longsuffering and patience of God, delaying His return so that as many will come, will turn and seek Him as their salvation. As we see the signs approaching with ever increasing intensity and

frequency that mark the beginning of the Tribulation, lift up your heads, for your redemption draws nigh and then we will hear...

*"Come, my people, enter your chambers,
And shut your doors behind you;
Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment,
Until the indignation is past. **Isaiah 26:20***

MARANATHA!

Thanks to Pastor Tim Fellure (Victory Baptist Church), JD Farag (Calvary Chapel Kaneohe), and Clarence Larkin in which much of this material comes from. Thank you gentlemen for your insight into the Scriptures!

Propheticus Maximus

Prophecy - Signs

Tuesday, April 24, 2012

Pete Garcia

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." Luke 21:25-26 NKJV

Many have raised the question as to whether the United States has a role to play in end-times Bible prophecy. Some like to attribute the Babylon mentioned in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Revelation as a last day's nod to the US. I would suggest that we aren't the Babylon, and furthermore that the Scriptures remain relatively silent as to our role. In a way, the Bible can be viewed as a Will to the nations. Here is what God promises is coming your way at the appropriate time.

Considering that nations like Russia, China, Israel, and Europe have roles to play (good or bad) and they are predominantly not Christian seems very foreboding for a nation that is predominantly Christian (at least perception wise). Either the US is not there or has become a non-factor in the global scene.

Currently, our nation sits atop the global hierarchy when it comes to military superiority. Hypothetically, if we were to unleash our nation's full military might, we could turn the civilized world into ashes in mere days and weeks. Our military strength does not lie in our vast numbers of fighting men, nor in our extreme idealistic patriotism, but in our superior technology. But our technology is largely based on electronic systems, which will also prove to be our Achilles heel. Ours is reliant upon a system of systems to properly feed information and energy to itself. If one part of the system were to go down, it exposes huge gaps in our national armor which an enemy could easily exploit.

For instance, our reliance upon satellites puts a whole bunch of strategic eggs in one basket...the eggs being the Internet, communications, weather, and navigational capabilities. As we are in the window of the Solar Maximum, there is a pretty good chance we will have strong solar activity for the next few years. Never in the history of mankind have a people been so utterly vulnerable to the impact of what the sun could do. Were the US to have a direct hit from an Electro Magnetic Pulse (EMP) from either a solar storm or enemy nuclear strike in our atmosphere, we would be rendered helpless rather quickly. A powerful solar storm wouldn't even have to penetrate our atmosphere; it need only hit our satellites orbiting the earth. Imagine an X-Class Solar flare hitting us at just the right time and position, and our satellite

systems would be fried. If you've ever lost electronic equipment due to a lightning strike, you know the damage that can be done.

Currently, our world is shielded by a magnetic field that filters out the harmful ultra-violet rays and allows the good rays to enter our atmosphere. If a large enough Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) were to hit the earth head-on (which it will one day) destroying that magnetic field, then any subsequent flares would continue to have disastrous effects. Good-bye pretty northern lights...hello heat waves of unimaginable proportions.

"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place." (Revelation 6:12-14)

"Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory." (Revelation 16:8-9)

Were our nation's Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) be destroyed in a Solar flare event, it would severely restrict our ability to maneuver drones, missiles, ships, and aircraft globally. Civilian air travel would come to a screeching halt and internet based Smart Power grids would be blacked out in cities around the US. Panic would not only rock the streets, but Wall Street as well. Law and order would quickly erode into survival of the fittest. If the Western Hemisphere were facing the sun when a solar flare hits, it could fry our systems while theoretically leaving the Eastern Hemisphere intact.

Granted, the military has taken this possibility into account, but we as a whole don't have the budget to outfit our entire forces for such protective measures. Maybe this is why the US is preemptively fixing laws that do away with Habeas Corpus and Posse Comitatus. It would also explain why the NSA is building a massive information collection hub in Utah.

Secondly, this is only one of many plausible scenarios that could potentially render the US a neutral player. A Stuxnet type of virus could also infect whole systems and for all we know, may already be in place in some kind of dormant status, waiting on the right time to blossom. All that said, we don't have the political, moral, or national will any longer to stand united as a nation if something catastrophic enough were to take aim at the United States. Do we think we are the same people as the 'Greatest Generation'? From what we know of nations like China or Russia, would they come to our aid, or will they come to plunder a nation in collapse? I'm fairly certain that there is much our government does not tell us, for fear of that if people knew the truth, there would be an uncontrollable descent into panic.

But consider this, what better way to consolidate power than to allow a catastrophic event to happen. If 9/11 hadn't happened, would we have had the Patriot Act and a very robust Homeland Defense Department? In fact, the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 came about after the 1991 World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings. Whether they were necessary or effective is never measured, it is the semblance of control that our government is attempting to convey every time a significant terrorist event occurs. The government uses those events as a legitimate reason to increase its control over its citizenry. It is just a fact of life these days; increased security always comes at the expense of our liberty.

I understand that a Solar Flare is quite different than say computer hackers hacking into the Pentagon's database or something, or a rogue regime launching a nuke from a boat in the middle of the Pacific that detonates over our airspace. Any of these scenarios seem implausible, but only because they haven't happened yet. Who would have thought that Muslims with box

cutters could hijack planes and fly them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and almost into the White House? 9/11 showed us that we are not invulnerable. Our enemies know militarily that they can't go toe to toe with us, so they are going to find a back door and exploit it with a vengeance.

Likewise, our continued national rebellion against God through things like legalized abortion, normalization of homosexuality, growing apostasy in the churches, embracing wickedness nationally, and our abandonment of Israel will surely keep God's protective hand from over our nation. With that protection gone, God will remove His blessings from our lands and allow us to reap the consequences of our decisions.

Throughout history, we can see that out of chaos, comes bondage. As our nation continues to come under increasingly severe judgments (socially, naturally, economically, and militarily), our system that is ever so delicately balanced on the presumption that our rights are granted by God, and not man...will begin to come apart. As it does, law and order will break down. The questions experts are asking is not if it will, but when and how. Will it be suddenly through a catastrophic event? Or will we drift into collapse? When we do, someone will be there to pick up the pieces and seize control. Whether our collapse comes from mankind, or from God Himself, our days have been numbered, and we have been found wanting. We know from Scriptures that a man will rise up in the end from the area of the old Roman Empire, and he will take control of the whole world. That control includes the USA (or what's left of it)

As for the Church, we know that the Lord will return prior to the start of the Tribulation when He pours out His wrath upon the earth and those that dwell on it. What we don't know is how bad it will be prior to this. Some point to Luke 17 and the reference Jesus points too (the days of Noah and Lot) would be similar to when He would return. Those people were not under judgment but were living as if there was no God. Others point to the increase in wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, and general degradation of society as found in Matthew 24 and see that things will continue to wax worse.

I think maybe it's a little of both, that there will be places on earth that will experience terrible calamities (both man made and natural). Similarly, there will be places that aren't experiencing it, and will live as if there were no God or nothing to fear beyond this life. We as believers shouldn't spend our days in fear of what is coming upon the earth, nor spend our time perplexed and anxious about all the doomsday scenarios that play 24/7 on cable TV and shoddy websites. For our Lord Jesus Christ Himself comforts us with these words as He is describing what will be the signs of His coming and the end of the age:

"Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." (Luke 21:27-28 NKJV) Even So...Maranatha!

The Things We Leave Behind

In Defense of the Faith

Tuesday, May 01, 2012

Pete Garcia

One of the biggest obstacles people have about becoming a Christian is that they think once you do, all the fun has to end. Like entering the priesthood where the only thing they have to look forward too is celibacy and endless sermons. They see only the negatives of 'thou shall not's', and none of the liberty and freedom that is found in Christ.

Our Religion

Churches across the fruited plain are filled with row after row of 'pious' people, who you'd think their face would crack in two if they ever tried to smile. This is in large part due to the preachers and pastors, who so convince their congregations that their moral traditions are the sole way to Jesus, that they feverishly build a fence around their dogma to keep their flocks in, it also effectively keeps many out. We should be known for our love, not our ability to be religious.

Our Experience

"A man who has friends must himself be friendly,^[1] But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." **Proverbs 18:24 NKJV**

Our past experiences help shape our worldviews and act as a rudder if you will for the decisions we will make in the future. They can be beneficial if used properly, but no one ever moved very far forward in life, when stuck living in the past. Some may have had a bad experience at a church, or with 'Christians' and have sworn them and their Jesus off forever. Often times, when bad things happen, people shake an angry, clenched fist at God and harden their hearts.

This can be an extremely difficult barrier to overcome, because no one can persuade you otherwise, from what you know you experienced. Maybe a clergy abused you, or some guy at church swindled you out of some hard earned money. What I can offer is that all people are flawed, and unfortunately, Christians are human too.

But consider this, that Jesus was more than just a human...He was also fully God. He didn't have to come to earth to die for yours and my sins, but chose to because of His infinite love for us. Do not add insult to injury by rejecting the one perfect, holy, blameless man...because of some injury to you by someone claiming to be His representative. Put your faith and trust in God, and let Him sort out the bad seeds from the genuine believers.

Don't judge Christianity or Christ by someone who did you wrong, way back when. Christ can be a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Not only will He never betray you, but He will also never forsake you. Even when you are at the lowest point in your life, He will love you when no one else would.

Our Reasoning

"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14 NKJV

In today's modern world, becoming a Christian has also been likened to a kind of mental disease. Like entering an old mental asylum, in which the sign over the door forebodingly states "Abandon all hope all ye that enter!" Becoming a born-again believer is attuned to abandoning all reason, because we believe in a God that no one can see, that much is true, but the evidence for the God of the Bible is overwhelming.

To the unbeliever, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is foolishness because it denies mankind the ability to claim any kind of credit for our own salvation. That is what makes Christianity unique. EVERY other religion states that you must DO something to make amends with either some god or fellow man in order to reach Paradise, Heaven, Nirvana, Kolob, etc. Christian salvation is solely founded on the one thing that distinguishes us from any other life form on this planet, and that is our ability to think and reason. We have to willingly make that decision to come to Christ. When we abandon our own attempts at saving ourselves, and cling instead to Jesus Christ, then and only then can we have peace with God through His Son.

Material Desires

"Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." Mark 10:21 NKJV

Of note in this account, is that Jesus had not yet gone to the cross. At that point in time, the cross was not only a cruel instrument of torture, but to the Jew was a symbol of damnation. Jesus was looking into this young man's heart and could see that his wealth was his security blanket. He had been faithful to the commandments (religion) but was more reliant upon his earthly possessions than he was of God. So Jesus by telling him to sell all his possessions, he was to deny this world. By picking up his cross, he has to deny himself, even to his health. This way of thinking runs counter to many within the health, wealth, and gospel movement that has become popular in American churchianity these days.

This World

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." Philippians 3:20-21 NKJV

To the Christian who has one foot in each world, remember Lot's wife. We are not to get too attached to this world, nor the things therein. Why so many Christians have become fixated on this world, is in part again, denominational religion's fault. When the Church refuses to teach all of God's word, they have to fill that large prophetic void with something, and usually that has something to do with focusing on the here and now, rather than on what is to come.

When you turn your life over to Jesus Christ, you are made a new creation. No longer are you just an inhabitant of this world but have a new citizenship in heaven with God. The moment you become a Christian; you begin to live in eternity. At best, a person can hope to live to be about a hundred years here in this life. Those last few decades can be tough on the body, and you usually end up having to have someone care for you. Such a short period of time when considering that the moment you die, you will be staring into the face of eternity.

Conclusion

There is a freedom in Jesus Christ that the world cannot fathom. What is that freedom? It is in no longer being under the curse of sin, condemnation, death, and judgment. It is liberating, because we no longer have a death sentence hanging over our head.

Seeing as we still inhabit these sin-prone bodies (tents of flesh) and we still live in a fallen world that is temporarily controlled by Satan, we still in our flesh have to 'work out' (think exercise) our salvation with fear and trembling. We as Christians still have to stand before Jesus Christ in judgment, but not for our salvation. We will stand before Jesus Christ at the Bema Judgment for the things done for Christ in this life, whether good or bad. Is what we did for Jesus done for our own purposes, or did we do it for the glory of God? We rest assured that our eternal destinies are secured in the victory that Christ wrought for us at the cross, 2,000 years ago, where all of our sins-past, present, and future were wiped away.

In Christ we enter our Sabbath rest, unable to work our own attempts at keeping our salvation, but find peace through His perfect, atoning death, burial, and resurrection. A peace so satisfying that all of the money in the world could not purchase. When you choose to allow God to use you, He will work the miraculous through you, affecting everyone around you. A life filled with purpose and meaningfulness, worthy of your calling, and hopeful of the life that is still to come. Our best life isn't here on this fallen planet; it is in our glorified eternal bodies, reigning with Christ. So let us cast aside all these meaningless distractions that would either keep you from coming to Christ or keep the Christian from living the life Christ has called you to live.

"Has this world been so kind to you that you should leave with regret? There are better things ahead than any we leave behind." CS Lewis

Living Stones

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, May 08, 2012

Pete Garcia

Do you feel like your life is unfair? Do you feel like it is just one problem after another, and that no matter what, you can't seem to get your head above the water? Do you have those imperfect relationships, maybe at work or at home, where certain people just rub you the wrong way all the time? Do you ever stop and ask God "Why Me?" Well, if the answer to any of these questions is yes, then this article is for you!

When I was growing up in central Texas, we used to live by an abandoned rock quarry where they would dig out limestone and gravel. We had to drive by it every day to get to town. When I was younger, it used to fascinate me, as if it would be a fun place to play and ride a bike in. Now while the quarry itself is the ugly eyesore that is what's left, but what's taken out is what is used for bigger and better things.

"And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built." 1 Kings 6:7

Our life here in this world is like that quarry. As unbelievers, we are just part of this earth, unshaped and wild. But when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, He scoops us out of the earth and begins to shape and mold us into someone that will be put to use somewhere else in this life.

As Christians, we are promised tribulations in this life, and so we suffer abuses, mistreatments, ridicule, and situations that we would rather not be in. We work with people daily who try our patience. We live under various leaders and systems of government that are corrupt and sometimes evil. Even more so, we are stuck with family that we had no say in being related too, but we have to deal with them nonetheless. But all of these are in a way, the chiseling that helps shape us and refine us into the character of who God has called us to be.

"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion, A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.'" 1 Peter 2:4-6

We, like those stones going into the temple, are being shaped and smoothed for bigger and better things where we are. The rubbing, chipping, and chiseling works to smooth out OUR imperfections and shape us into the men and women God has called us to be. It isn't we, who are making our selves acceptable to God; it is God who is doing that to us through our circumstances working everything according to His good will.

Job, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and James...all men who endured severe tribulation in their lives, some even to the point of horrible and brutal deaths.

All these men's lives have been recorded onto the pages of the eternal Scripture as a testimony for all eternity, the costs we pay to serve a living God who will reward our suffering in this life with eternal glory in the next. Our lives too, are being recorded, and may one day be laid open for others to see what we suffered, and how we overcame our tribulations to be the people God called us to be. We are being shaped for bigger and better things than the mere 70-80 years we spend here in this fallen planet. Our future glory, will have no end and its beginning, began before the world was formed when God foreknew you, and chose you, to become part of His eternal family.

*And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them, And walk among them, I will be their God, And they shall be My people." **2 Corinthians 6:15-17***

To Israel, the Temple was where God dwelt. To the Church, we are the temple because that is where God dwells. They (Israel) rejected their cornerstone, and we accepted Him. And because we did, we are made acceptable to God, and also become part of the same family. But beloved, God is not through with Israel or the Jews, and will at the Rapture, remove His bride from earth and turn His attention back to the apple of His eye, and will redeem Israel that none of them should perish.

Two peoples, one glory. We don't fully understand it now because we see through the glass darkly but know that God made irreconcilable promises to Israel on account of the Patriarchs. Because they rejected the Cornerstone at their prophetically appointed time, God has set them aside temporarily during this age and taken a people for Himself. He has grafted in the Church as a wild vine, a burgeoning cluster of grapes like the ones Joshua and the spies brought back from Canaan...so large and heavy that it had to be carried on a pole between two men. When our fullness comes in, we too will be carried home.

I often speak of the tribulations that we undergo in this life, because so many of our brothers and sisters have to endure difficult times...especially in these last days. It is easy to give up, and not care and just let the distractions of this world keep you preoccupied with the here and now. But this life is short and it moves ever so quickly away from us like a dream that begins to escape you as you wake up. We can't see what glory lies ahead for us and all too often, we allow the distractions keep us from seeing the reality of our eternal destinies.

*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; **2 Corinthians 4:17***

I love that phrase in the KJV....**and eternal weight of glory**. CS Lewis had this to say about our willingness to settle for the things in this life, because we cannot fathom the glory that lies ahead for us in the next life.

"We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

If you've seen a rock quarry, then you know what an eye sore it is...a scar blighting the face of this fallen planet. But the quarry is neither our home nor our final destination. It is where we started before God took us and began shaping us into something beautiful with a far grander purpose than our tiny, finite minds can fathom. Be strong in your faith and allow God to shape you into the person He wants you to be by the saving power of His Son Jesus Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit, and by the renewing of your mind by the Word...and you too will overcome as Christ did...and;

*He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. **Revelation 3:12***

It Is Well

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, May 15, 2012

Pete Garcia

"Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not tried." -
Gilbert K. Chesterton

As I was riding out to a field exercise this morning in the back of a Blackhawk helicopter, I began pondering about the grand scheme of things. I've flown helicopters hundreds of times, and ridden in them probably just as many, and I always think about the same thing.

I suppose being up hundreds to thousands of feet in the air has that effect on me...I default to seeing the big picture. That is probably why my articles generally tend to be broad sweeping statements spanning thousands of years over the history of mankind, rather than focusing on the tiny details of something. I'm used to seeing things from a great height, and despite suffering an ironical (but mild) case of acrophobia, I feel rather comfortable there. I see the world and ask why something is, rather than how it is. I'll leave the scientific reasons of how left/right brain works to the experts like my friend Wendy Wippel, and discuss the 'why' of this particular article.

So I've concluded that in this life, we will all have problems.

Yes, there are good things like seeing your baby smile, or the beauty of watching the sun setting behind the mountains. There are beautiful things that we can marvel at and look at with awe and wonder. But for all the beauty and wonder there is in this life, there is a greater and darker evil that permeates every facet of our existence here on this planet. It grows worse by each passing day. But don't take my word for it; Jesus Himself said that this is what would come our way. (Mark 13:5-8). The Apostle Paul also said that 'perilous times' would come.

We live in a world that is growing increasingly cynical, cold, bitter, and spiteful. Every day, 150,000 people leave this 'vale of tears' as my friend Steve often alludes too, and go onto their eternal destinies. This world is not our home, and in fact, this world is being controlled by the enemy, the Devil who roams to and fro, seeking whom he may devour. So that leaves us as Christians, trapped living behind enemy lines while we inhabitant this realm of existence.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" 1 Peter 5:8

But it is not only the enemy without that troubles us, but also the enemy within. Before you became a Christian, you only had your old nature, which was quite content here in the flesh. You fed your lusts and lived for the here and now. Once you become a Christian, you become a 'new creation' with a new nature. Being born again puts your new nature at odds with your old nature, and there the struggle begins. You quit feeding the lusts of the flesh, and you begin to die daily to your own self gratification. So not only are you a new babe in Christ living behind enemy lines, but you also have a traitor within your midst! Christ didn't say this life would be easy, in fact, we will have trials and tribulations, but because He overcame the world through His death, burial, and resurrection, we too, have that same assurance.

*"These things I have spoken unto you, that **in me ye might have peace**. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33*

But when times get tough, I often think back to the life of Horatio G. Spafford and what it must have been like to stand on the deck of that ship as he passed over the watery graves of his children. I don't think I would have had the intestinal fortitude to withstand the sweeping emotions had I stood in his place and looked down where the bodies of my children lay far below the surface of that cold, dark ocean. But our faith, as promised by our Lord, will be tested in this life. We will be rocked to and fro, and our world turned upside down with only our faith in God and His grace to cement our hope that one day, all will be made right.

Horatio turned this unbelievable anguish into words that would come to touch and comfort tens of millions of lives because he let God turn that momentary pain and affliction into something beautiful. His hope was not pinned to one day laying on his death bed eventually fading off into heaven, but rather, that Jesus would return as promised for His bride the Church. Sadly, fewer and fewer churches sing the old hymns like this anymore, and even the ones that do, often skip the most inspiring verses, much to the detriment to the joy of their congregations.

Horatio writes in his timeless song, "It Is Well, With My Soul"

Verses 5 & 6:

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

Truly, I sorrow for those who do not have that Blessed Hope. I do not say that disparagingly, but sincerely grieving for my brothers and sisters in Christ who do not have this to look forward to...recognizing that our Bible tells us we are to not only look for it, but to comfort one another with those words, not deny it or argue about the timing of it. No man knows the day or the hour,

but Christ Himself said that we could know the season of His return. The Apostle Paul also addresses this, in that as believers...this day should not catch us unawares.

*"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief." 1
Thessalonians 5:4*

Our problems can be overwhelming if we allow them to be. When we feel unloved, we need only look back at the Cross. When we feel alone, we need only trust in the fact that Christ said He would never leave us or forsake us, and also that the Holy Spirit would indwell and seal us, until the day of our redemption. When we feel anguish, allow God to use that pain and turn it into something beautiful. When life seems to be unbearable, we need only trust in the fact that Jesus said that He would return for His Church and take us to be where He is forever. Resolve in your mind and in your heart, that come what may, nothing will shake your faith in our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

*"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again, and receive you unto myself**; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3*

The big picture is that God loved us so much, that He not only created everything from the largest galaxy down to the smallest atom, but the amount of detail He put into each and every thing. His power is such that He sustains everything by the sheer power of His will. (Col 1:16-17) He knows each star by name, and knows the numbers of hair on your head. Not only does He know the numbers of hairs on your head, but also every person who has ever lived.

This same mighty Creator God, then set aside His Divinity and put on the flesh of a man, walked amongst us, allowing Himself to be beaten, tortured, and killed as a substitute in our stead. He didn't have to do that, but He did because He loved us with a love we can't even begin to fathom. But death could not hold Him, and He was raised on the third day to conquer death and hell forever, for those that put their faith and trust in Him for their salvation.

So if God could do all of that by the sheer power of His will, how little a thing is it for Him, to return for His Church like He said He would?

*"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; **Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ**; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 2:11-14*

Snapshot of a Moving Picture III

Commentary on the News

Tuesday, May 22, 2012

Pete Garcia

While we are frequently surprised by the turn of events that happen on the global scene, many of the prophetic passages in the Bible can't be revealed with 100% certainty until the appropriate time for them to be revealed has come to pass. What we can know, is the general trends in prophecy and where they seem to point towards, and it is to that, I would like to address the possible motivation for the 'Kings of the East'.

Japan

For most of Asia, there has always been a perplexing issue of trust between the east and the west. They like the dollars, technology, and world status they enjoy...but the trust has never been there. Japan remained a closed society for many centuries largely due to their complex language and culture, and their government who wouldn't allow foreigners in, for fear of spreading Christianity. It wasn't until the Treaty of Kanagawa (Perry Convention of 1854) in which the US basically forced the Japanese to open their ports for trade by showing up with numerous warships demanding it. Article one of the treaty states:

Article I – There shall be a perfect, permanent and universal peace, and a sincere and cordial amity, between the United States of American on the one part and between their people, respectfully, (respectively,) without exception of persons or places

Ironically, less then 100 years later the Japanese would bomb Pearl Harbor and our warships on that tragic day on December 7th, 1941. The US finally broke their fighting spirit with two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in which they would suffer a generation with radiation illnesses. Since then, Japan has been a relatively peaceful society. They emerged as one of the top economies in the world, largely built upon the Japanese work-ethic and their intense focus on math and science. Yet, were it not for that fateful day on March 11th, 2011, their economy would have begun to slow down as their debt to GDP was off the charts. Not only did the earthquake shake the nation of Japan 8 feet westward, it also destroyed one of their primary methods for clean energy production...their nuclear power. Now, a massive drift of radioactive trash is heading toward the pristine Pacific US coastline. Ironically, between the US and Japan, it is tit-for-tat as to who would radioactively pollute each other the most.

Korea

The South Korean's know they can't afford a war with the North, nor could their economy absorb millions of impoverished, uneducated, and heavily brainwashed North Koreans. It would break their economy in two, and they witnessed the pains that Germany went through (and is still going through) trying to get the former East Germany up to par with the west. This is where China comes in. In exchange for removing Kim and their generals, they will help ease the burden of reunification, BUT...there are of course those same heavy strings.

In my mind, China is using North Korea as pit bull on a leash. They are able to keep South Korea, Japan, and the West off balance, and when one of the Kim's begins to get a little too crazy; they tighten their grip on the leash and give it a good yank. At some point, North Korea

will become more of a liability, and they will dismantle North Korea's leadership in exchange for Korean solidarity behind China. The western world might celebrate China's sudden generosity and demonstration of regional leadership but beware the hidden agenda!

China

As was noted in a previous article (SMP July 2011), China has slowly and quietly morphed not only into a global giant, but into a regional bully as well. Economically, the Chinese powerhouse, effectively and for all intents and purposes, knocked the USA off the top of the food-chain pyramid in both fiscal and political importance on the global stage.

Currently, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines are in a Mexican stand off again. China is claiming control over the entire oil and mineral rich South China Seas, even claiming land that is off the coast of the Philippines. The Filipinos are protesting it and are willing to provoke a skirmish, but if such an event occurred, the US would be reluctant to enter.

China, however, claims virtually all of the South China Sea as its territory. That includes waters close to the coasts of the Philippines and other Asian countries in the region. Nations that have expressed concern over China's claim to ownership of the sea include Taiwan, Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia, India and Russia, as well as the U.S.(Global Post)

How far is China willing to take it? I'm betting all the way, as they not only have the military might, technologically speaking, they have an unlimited number of men they could throw at an enemy and not even feel it. Not to mention, untold hundreds of billions of dollars in wealth that comes by loaning money to indebted western nations, out-producing manufactured goods through the flagrant violation of copyright laws, sweat shops, and cyber warfare. What China currently lacks in military adventurism at the present, they make up for in economic tyranny and deceitfulness.

Because of Japan's Fukushima disaster, China's ghost cities may actually be put to use to house hundreds of thousands of displaced Japanese and North Koreans. Of course, the Chinese have not forgotten the Rape of Nanking; these offers of generosity will come with heavy strings the size of anchor chains attached to them.

RRE

Since 1948, the Revived Roman Empire has been on the rise. It has been gradual but make no mistake; they will become the preeminent empire in the last days. We can already see the shift of power away from the US both toward the east and west. America will either continue to gradually slide into economic and political irrelevance or will suffer some catastrophic and unrecoverable event. Either way, what's left of the great military industrial complex will move to the next highest bidder.

The EU has a navy that is doing counter-piracy missions off the coast of Somalia. Most prophecy experts and students alike ask-"if the revived Roman Empire is the EU (and/or the Mediterranean Union), how could they be the world preeminent military power in such a short window of time?" It is very likely that NATO is the shell that the EU will build the rest of their military around. Having participated in some strategic fighting in Libya, and some grueling fighting in Afghanistan under the banner of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), they are already getting training. Foreign armies are paying good money to have US soldiers

come over and join their militaries, and are actively training their forces in such things as trauma medicine, aviation and air defense skills. If the US economy went south, it wouldn't be a stretch to think that US soldiers wouldn't sign up for the Australian or European forces if the pay was right. The EU is also looking to partner with none other than Iraq for future business ventures. Likely, the aftermath of Psalm 83 and Ezekiel 38-39 wars will allow Europe to once again come in and redistrict the Middle East like they did at the end of World War I, which also may play into the peace agreement that the Antichrist is able to establish with Israel.

The EU is in deep financial problems, with Greece and France voting in new radical leadership instead of facing the austere financial measures it would need to make in order to slow the collapse down. Greece is on the verge of running out of money, and should they depart the Eurozone (the Euro), this would weaken the Euro and speed up the collapse of Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Ireland as well. The Germans are tired of shouldering the burden of paying for the bailouts at the expense of the German taxpayer, and the idea that they too might depart has shaken the already fragile markets there. If I were a betting man, I could see the PIGS nations (minus Ireland) breaking away and jumping headfirst into a newly revived Union for the Mediterranean, who will continue to be headed by the recently unemployed former French President, Nicolas Sarkozy.

What the EU needs is a strong leader, who can transcend nationalism and unify the nations in the EU under a smart, fiscal plan...and the EU bureaucrats are working feverishly to make this come true. This plan will be much like Sweden's, in that they move their nation-states off of hard currency and onto a digital one. Since our modern currency is fiat, and not linked to a tangible standard such as gold, our currency is given an artificial value, that will become all too easy to manipulate once it's digital. If and when the US collapses, all things (like oil) tied to the dollar will go into serious tumult. US dollars owned by nations like China, Germany, and Japan, will become worthless overnight and debts owed by the US to other nations will have to be defaulted causing economic pain felt on a global scale.

Conclusion

*[Sixth Bowl: Euphrates Dried Up] Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. **Revelation 16:12***

As we speak, the RRE is rising up and will one day soon, pose a real threat to China, Russia, and the Kings of the South. We know that the Antichrist cannot be revealed until after the Rapture. I think this is because the Rapture will produce the perfect catastrophic event to the world's system. It will take a man of great vision who sees this as a golden opportunity to seize power and take advantage of a chaotic situation. And while there are many Christians in many nations, the one nation it will impact the most severe, will be the United States.

Not because we have more Christians than China (we don't), but because our Christians are peppered throughout all levels of government, business, and key industries that keep our country running smoothly. Much like the sudden shift in power the world experienced when the Soviet Union collapsed (from bi-polar to the uni-polar), China will seek to call in all its markers by unifying the east with a steel fist in a velvet glove. China has been slowly and steadily been building up a colossal military monster, and I doubt that is simply for self-defense. Maybe this is why we are putting a permanent Marine base in northern Australia?

I could be wrong, but when it walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck...it's probably a duck.

The Paradox of a Righteous Lot

In Defense of the Faith

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

Pete Garcia

Most of us alive here in America tend to see the world with a western worldview. This worldview works fine for everyday life but can cause the average western believer consternation when trying to make sense of certain parts of the Scriptures. All Scripture is giving by inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16), but what we fail to sometimes consider, was that the men who physically wrote the Bible, were all from the Oriental world.

The Old Testament was written almost entirely in Hebrew and with a small portion in Aramaic. The New Testament was written entirely in Koinonia Greek (the common vernacular of the day). But it was Jewish men, who thought with a Hebraic mindset, that wrote both Old and New Testaments. So when we modern westerners get to certain parts of the scriptures that seem to be paradoxical to each other, we often times get perplexed at the seeming contradictions.

But to the Hebrew mind, opposing ideas could be equally accepted at the same time. Patterns that formed cycles were key to understanding the fullness of the entirety of the message. The Hebrew culture (like other eastern cultures) used what has been deemed, “block logic”, and in Marvin Wilson’s *“Our Father Abraham—Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith”*, he makes some interesting points about the two:

“The use of what may be termed block logic is another important contour of Hebrew thought. Greek logic, which has to a large extent influenced the Western world, was different. The Greeks often used a tightly contained step logic whereby one would argue from premises to a conclusion, each step linked tightly to the next in coherent, rational, logical fashion. The conclusion, however, was usually limited to one point of view—the human being’s perception of reality”

and...

“The Hebrew knew he did not know all the answers. His position was ‘under the sun’ (**Ecc. 8:17**), so his words were few (**5:2**). He refused to over-systematize or forced harmonization on the enigmas of God’s truth or the puzzles of the universe. He realized that no one could straighten what God has made crooked (**7:13**). All things, therefore, did not need to be fully rational. The Hebrew mind was willing to accept the truths taught on both sides of the paradox; it recognized that mystery and apparent contradictions are often signs of the divine. Stated succinctly, the Hebrews knew the wisdom of learning to trust in matters that they could not fully understand.”

In layman’s terms, those influenced in western thought, i.e....the Greco-Roman world-view, understood things in a linear, logical manner. We try and apply logic to a problem in order to come up with the most logical solution. Applying this type of mental methodology to Bible prophecy, can often times frustrates the purpose, which then causes confusion. Marvin Wilson provides some excellent examples in which ‘block logic’ is used in Scriptures:

“The book of Exodus says that Pharaoh hardened his heart, but it also says that God hardened it (**Ex. 8:15; cf. 7:3**). The prophets teach that God is both wrathful and merciful (**Isa.**

45:7; Hab. 3:2). The New Testament refers to [Yeshua] as the ‘Lamb of God’ and the ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah’ (**Jn. 1:29, 36; Rev. 5:5**). Hell is described as both ‘blackest darkness’ and the fiery lake’ (**Jude 13; Rev. 19:20**). In terms of salvation, [Yeshua] said, ‘whoever comes to me I will never drive away,’ yet no one can come ‘unless the Father draws him’ (**Jn. 6:37, 44**). To find life you must lose it (**Mt. 10:39**). When you are weak, then you are strong (**2 Cor. 12:10**). The way up (exaltation) is the way down (humility) (Lk. 14:11). ‘Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated’ (Rom. 9:13; Mal. 1:3).

Block logic is the mindset, that one can accept two opposing ideas as both equally true... it all depends on whose perception one is looking through.

Old Testament Lot

Throughout the entirety of his account beginning in Genesis chapter 11, through chapter 19, Lot was always living in the shadow of his older cousin Abram (Abraham). When they arrived at Canaan, Abram gave him the choice cut of land and they parted ways. A little later on, some wicked kings kidnapped Lot and Abram had to come to the rescue. From there, the Lord and two angels visit Abraham and give him a heads up, that they were going to visit Sodom and Gomorrah, and then destroy it. Abraham, knowing Lot lived there, asked one of the most pivotal questions that sets the tone for the rest of the Scriptures:

*And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” **Genesis 18:23***

Two angels were dispatched to Sodom and Gomorrah, and there Lot met them at the gate. He persuaded them to come back to his house because he knew the kind of evil that would befall these visitors should they remain out in the open. But this didn’t stop the men of the city from surrounding Lot’s house and attempting to break down the door to get to them. Lot does what any “red-blooded father” would do...and he offers up his two daughters in exchange for these visitors safety. The outraged mob attempt to rush Lot and the visitors...

And they (*the mob*) said, “*Stand back!*” Then they said, “This one (*Lot*) came in to stay here, and **he keeps acting as a judge**; now we will deal worse with you than with them.” So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door. **Genesis 19:9-11**

From there, the two visitors and Lot with family in tow depart the city early in the morning. Lot’s wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Lot ends up in the mountains with his two daughters, and they get him drunk and seduce him so they could get impregnated. Impressed yet? Seems like Lot is always getting himself into some kind of precarious situation.

New Testament Lot

Lot is referenced twice in the New Testament; first in Luke 17, when Jesus referencing what the world will be like when He returns, pointed back to the wickedness of that time. The second mention is by the Apostle Peter. And here, Peter gives three different examples of the punishment in which God had served in the past to curb the wickedness in the world: the fallen

angels who left their first estate and copulated with human women, the wicked people in Noah's day, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Lot's Day...

*....and delivered **righteous** Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that **righteous** man, dwelling among them, tormented his **righteous** soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— 2 Peter 2:7-8*

WHAT?! Did I miss something in the Genesis account? Three times, Peter was moved by the Holy Spirit to call this man Lot righteous. What did we see of this man's life and actions in the Old Testament that would warrant him being addressed as righteous now?

Remember that thing about 'block logic'? There is where our perception and God's, see things differently.

The Church

Just turn on the news or read the Drudge Report one day and you can quickly see the awful wickedness that permeates this day and age we live in. Lot's circumstance was just a microcosm of what we experience today. Both news and travel have greatly increased (Dan 12:4), and we know what's going on in the world as it happens. Since bad news sells better than good news, we are inundated with as much of it as one can take.

Whether its horrific crimes committed against the innocent, or wars, pestilence, famines, and corruption, you can be sure that no matter where you look, you don't have to look hard. For those of us who watch the signs of the times, it can make you weary and long for the Lord to return. Even now we are being oppressed by the filthy conduct that is being pressed on us to accept as normal by the "civilized" world. The issues include drugs, gay marriage, abortion, anti-Christian propaganda, euthanasia, apostate and false religious movements, genetic engineering, and violence perpetrated against the Church in many parts of the world.

Is your soul tormented? If it's not, then your head is in the proverbial hole in the sand. Remember, we are tri-partite beings: body, soul, and spirit. Even though one is saved (revived spirit), our souls (the conscious) is being tested like never before. The floodgates of evil are being opened and we are getting just a taste of what's going to be turned loose during the Tribulation. Even now, we are weary and long to be home in heaven with our Savior.

For those who don't watch for the Lord's soon return, it's just business as usual. And that attitude often feeds the frustration many of us feel when sharing the gospel with urgency we know...with the apathetic or spiritually blinded who don't know how close to the end we really are, nor do they want to know.

The Pattern and the Plan

According to the Strong's Lexicon, Lot's name in Hebrew means "Covering" and since he had to be removed prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we too will be removed prior to the Wrath of God being poured out on this world. As the body of Christ on earth, we are inhabited and sealed by the Holy Spirit, overcomers chosen by God before the foundation of the world ever came to be (Eph 1:4). **[The Plan]** At the Rapture, the Holy Spirit's ministry of restraint is likewise removed, and God's wrath is poured out on a Christ rejecting world. When the covering is removed, God's wrath was poured out on the plain's cities of Sodom and

Gomorrah. When the Church is removed (along with the Restrainer) the wrath will be poured out. This pattern is repeated throughout the Scriptures. God does not destroy the righteous with the wicked. **[The Pattern]** Although we don't see much righteousness in Lot's testimony, God did. Although we don't have much to brag about ourselves, God sees us as righteous through the shed blood of His Son on the cross at Calvary. It may not always make sense to us, but it does to God. And I love it when God's plan comes together!

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. **2 Corinthians 5:2***

It's Later than You Think

Prophecy - Signs

Tuesday, June 05, 2012

Pete Garcia

To the Dispensationalist, the entirety of humanity's short span on this earth can be broken down into clearly definable seasons...or *ages* in which God (who never changes) dealt differently with mankind regarding his relational standing before Him.

"To everything *there is* a **season**, A time for every purpose under heaven:" **Ecclesiastes 3:1**

In the Garden of Eden, man was commanded not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Aside from being told to be fruitful and multiply, and to take dominion of the earth...this was the only 'thou shalt not' commandment given from God. They lived in **innocence** and tended to the Garden until the day they broke the one commandment they were instructed not to do. Adam and Eve ate from the tree allowing sin to enter into the human race and they were cast out of that perfect Garden. Thus, mankind entered a new season in which they would live their lives, ruled by their newfound conscience of knowing good and evil.

From then until the Flood, there was roughly 1560 years that man did what was right in his own eyes. There was no Law, no Bible, no governing authority by which man could live in peace with his fellow man and His maker. It quickly became a time of lawlessness, in which even the fallen angels had crossed over into forbidden territory by mating with human women.

By the time that Noah was to build the Ark, mankind had sunk to unimaginable depths of depravity. In fact, it was so bad, that God had to destroy mankind (save 8 persons) with the Flood in order for mankind to survive. This global cataclysm brought the age in which man would rule by his conscious to an abrupt and violent end. At the end of it, God covenanted with Noah (Noahic Covenant) that innocent blood would no longer be shed without consequence. And with the creation of capital punishment instituted, therein lays the framework for man to rule over other men in the age of **human government**.

The age of **promise** was in the calling of Abraham from the land Ur of the Chaldees to the Promised Land in which his descendants would inherit forever. Abraham was the first person to be called a Hebrew in Scriptures, thus we can conclude that prior to that, there were only Gentiles.

Now, there were two races of peoples: Jews and Gentiles. God foretold Abraham as he slept, that the Hebrews would be enslaved for 400 years before they could inherit the land. This time was necessary to give the current inhabitants (Amorites) time to repent (which they didn't). God would then use the Israelites to become their judgment, cleansing the land of their impurity. Abraham's calling to sacrifice his only begotten son would foreshadow the way in which God would provide a path to redemption some 2,000 years later.

Moses led the Israelites out of bondage and into the wilderness, in which he received the Law from God...thus beginning the age of the Law. This age went on for roughly 1500 years before finding the fulfillment in the first coming of their Messiah, Jesus Christ. As was prophesied, He was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver and crucified on a Cross on behalf of the sins of the world.

Before He died, He stated that He would create a body of people known as the Church (Matthew 16:17-19), who would continue on until He personally came and took them back to be where He was (John 14:1-3). As sin entered the world through the first Adam, redemption would enter the world through the last Adam, who is Christ our Lord.

Eve was taken and created from Adams side, so too would the Bride of Christ be born from the side of Christ. As when a woman is about to give birth, her water will break in which blood and water pour forth. On the cross, when His side was pierced, blood and water poured out symbolizing the birthing process of the Church through His death. Our empowerment (or what people come to see as the birthday of the Church) was at Pentecost as mentioned in Acts 2. From there, almost 2,000 years has transpired and we have seen the Church go through the 7 stages (Revelation 2-3) of its life from then until now. To recap:

Rough numbers according to genealogies and history

From Creation until Abraham, was 2,000 years [Innocence, Conscience, and Human Government]

From Abraham until Jesus Christ, was 2,000 years [Promise, Law]

From Jesus Christ, until today, was 2,000 years [Church, Tribulation (final last 7 years of the Law)]

The Purpose

And like the wise King Solomon noted...EVERYTHING...has a season. Seasons have two things in common.... they have a beginning, and they have an ending. As shown, each of the previous ages had beginning and endings, so why would it be any different for the age that we currently live in? Looking back, what was unique about the age of the Law was that it was cut short by approximately 7 years.

“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city,” **Daniel 9:24**

The Prophet Daniel was given the 70 weeks of years prophecy by the angel Gabriel, in which from its starting until its end, there would be a total of 490 years (70 x 7) that would be set aside for the nation of Israel.

It began in Nehemiah 2 (445BC) with the commandment to go forth and rebuild not the Temple, but the city of Jerusalem, and would end approximately 173,880 days (483--360 day years) later as Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. We know historically that the remaining 7 years were not fulfilled after the resurrection, nor do they fit any 7-year period between then and now. But according to the angel Gabriel...those 7 final years set aside for Israel will absolutely occur:

"Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come." **Daniel 10:14**

Holding Back

Those who subscribe to the reference in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 of the Restrainer being the Holy Spirit often believe that the Holy Spirit restrains evil from the world at large. Rather, seeing that there has been an ever-increasing amount of evil since Pentecost, I believe that the Restrainer has restrained evil not from the world, but from destroying the Church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said that "He would build His church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it". This implies that the Church (body of Christ) would ever be on an offensive attack against the strongholds of the devil, since gates are meant for defensive purposes until the age of the Church would end.

Christians have seen bloody periods of persecution in the past, where the world unsuccessfully attempted to stop the spread of Christianity. We have seen and are seeing various forms corruptions that enter the Church in an attempt to pollute it with false and apostate doctrine...yet, there still remains a remnant that are faithful to the word. We've seen an oppression of the believers in these last days grow like a cancer in an attempt to shame and silence believers...yet there still goes the Gospel out of the mouths and minds of those who are not afraid to speak the truth.

The door which God opens cannot be shut by anyone, except God. It will not be until the Rapture of the Church, when the Body of Christ is removed allowing the Antichrist and his beastly system to overcome the Tribulation saints. This purging effectively leaves the Antichrist's worldly kingdom pitted against one nation in particular...Israel. This is the purpose and the season in which the fulfillment of the 7 final years finds its culmination.

Arguing the Negatives

So what remains? We don't have to wait for Israel to become a nation again. (Ezekiel 37) We don't have to wait for the Jews to recapture Jerusalem. (Luke 21:24) We don't have to wait for there to be a movement within Judaism who has the material, money, and ability to rebuild a third temple. (TMF) We don't have to wait for Israel's enemies to align themselves as Scripture say they will in the last days. (Ezekiel 38) We don't have to wait for there to be a worldwide call for a unified political system. We don't have to wait for there to be the technology to implement a global economic system. We don't have to wait for the skeptics and the scoffers to come along and mock those who believe that Christ will return for His Church? We don't have to wait for wide spread apostasy to cause the church to become lukewarm and ineffective.

The world has conditioned the masses to think that life will just continue on as it always has. They base this theory off of their corrupted theories that life slowly came about by evolution over millions of years even though their theories are illogical and scientifically impossible. They reject the Bible's account of man's true history on this planet. We don't know how much longer He will hold back His restraint, but if the past is any key to understanding the future, when our time (the Church Age) has reached its fullness, the end of this age will come suddenly and without warning.

"But concerning the times and the **seasons**, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape." **1 Thessalonians 5:1-3**

The Girl from Ipanema

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

Pete Garcia

I'll just say upfront, that I'm not picking on Catholics this week. This article has just as much application to Protestants, Mormons, and anyone else who thinks that the more holy we try to be, the more acceptable to God we become. But I mention the Catholics because of two situations I found myself in over the past week.

I got the opportunity to spend some quality time with two Catholic friends over the past week. In the past, I'd have no problem sharing the Gospel with strangers, but it was always more intimidating sharing with the people who knew me well. I was afraid I already knew the answer to my question before I even asked it, but out of curiosity, I asked how they thought a person receives eternal salvation.

My first friend's response was he wasn't entirely sure, but it had something to do with going to church. My second friend began listing the various things one has to do to be a good Catholic, which would by default put him in good standing with God; confession, baptism, sacraments, and catechism. And if those don't work out, you can always go to purgatory and hopefully find a way out from there.

I was surprised, and not surprised at the same time...and so I began walking them through John chapter 3. I think I finished with John 3:36 and one friend said in clear astonishment..."**that can't be it...it's too easy! If that were true, then everyone would be saved.**"

I told him the sad truth is that most people will reject this free offer and try and earn their own way. They have bought into this lie that believing is too easy, and that we have to add something to our salvation, from our own efforts, to make it stick. I went on to explain that this is what distinguishes the true Christian faith from all the other belief systems out there. Christ did it all...all you have to do is believe. When we do this, Christ transforms us and it is not of ourselves. We can't earn our own salvation by our own righteousness ...if it were up to us; we'd all be doomed.

And considering that Catholicism is not only the largest "Christian" denomination in the United States, but in the world coming in at over a billion followers, most Catholics attribute salvation to something someone does, rather than what they believe. Consider these Catholic Sacraments (source):

- 1) Baptism
- 2) Penance
- 3) The Eucharist,
- 4) Confirmation
- 5) Extreme Unction
- 6) Holy Orders
- 7) Matrimony

I underlined the two that the Catholic church say are absolutely necessary for salvation. In this list...in whom does the power and authority for salvation and redemption rest with? Man or God? With the Roman Catholic church or the Holy Spirit? How do these rites and rituals line up with what the Scriptures say about how one is saved?

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." **John 3:36**

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." **Romans 10:9**

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." **Ephesians 1:13-14**

As was discussed in a previous article, God, who never changes...has dealt with man in different ways in the past (from a relational perspective). But from the beginning, the mechanism for salvation has never changed. It is by grace through faith that one comes to a saving knowledge and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Those who came before Christ, looked forward to the coming of a Redeemer. Those who were alive at the time of Christ...recognized Christ as the Messiah. Those of us since then look back to the work done on the Cross and realize that that was the moment when mankind could receive redemption.

Salvation has NEVER been about doing rituals and being religious...**if that were the case**, the Pharisees and Sadducees who condemned Christ would greet us in heaven...as they set the standard for religious piety during their day.

Probably one of my favorite passages in the Bible is this interaction between Christ, the sinful women, and the Pharisee. It demonstrates beautifully, how our own God sees our hopeless situation...thereby He is able to demonstrate His grace through our faith in order to save us from ourselves.

I agree with Paul's statement, in that I recognize that I am chief amongst sinners. If given the chance, I will fail again and again. But here is the kicker...that even when I feel like I am at my holiest...God can already see down the road of my unlived life...and sees all the mistakes that I will continue to make...and forgave me all of them the moment I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior many years ago.

Subliminal Perception

Have you ever been in a store or elevator, and found yourself humming a song that you had no idea where it came from? I always think of the 'Girl from Impanema' as that annoying tune that you can't get out of your head once you hear it. Somewhere in that building, they're playing this music at just a low enough decibel that the brain will recognize it, but not loud enough to be heard above all the white noise. That is kind of how we as Christians have been conditioned in recent years to keep our faith to ourselves.

It has been relentless misinformation campaigns by the Devil to make us think that the real issues have to do with either the political left or right, and not the eternal issues that have eternal ramifications. Politically, people have had their eyes opened in recent years due to the outright brashness of the liberally biased media; and the average person is outraged! But where is the outrage for the true misinformation campaign that tells man that belief is not enough, that he MUST add too his/her salvation?

I used to listen to the political commentators like Hannity, Beck, and Limbaugh...and would agree with them for the most part on political issues. But when it comes to the things that REALLY matter...like the eternal destination of our eternal souls...they are silent. They all come to this lukewarm, quasi-Christian idea that as long as you try and be a good person...you're doing the right thing.

The mantra is that we have to set our differences aside and 'unite behind fiscal conservatism!' Unite with the Catholics to oppose Obamacare. Unite with peoples of all faiths (because in the world's view...their all equally valid) to oppose the liberals or to oppose the conservatives. United in a common argument against (name the issue) and set your religious beliefs aside...because those are personal, and we can't let them cloud the "real" issues.

So we stand and protest this issue or that issue. We vote in the conservative/liberal politician, and we think we are doing our part. We call in and/or write to various places to have our opinion heard. We boycott certain establishments because they support this or that. But our true mission as Christians, our mission fields...is in those houses immediately surrounding ours. They're our co-workers and fellow students. They're our family members and neighbors that we interact with on a daily basis. If we were half as active in sharing our faith with those closest to us as we were with the political issues, that frankly won't matter a hill of beans one day...we could transform this nation overnight.

The fact is, is that we have been conditioned by the forces on the left and the right to keep our 'beliefs' to ourselves. I've felt this message drummed into my psyche from an early age. It was why I was reluctant to share my faith for the longest time.

Religious, political and social activism will never transform the human heart. Only the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit through our saving faith in Jesus Christ can do that. It's in realizing that our own works and efforts will never be enough. But there is so much confusion out there about how one gets saved, that it takes us Christians to step up and step out of our bubble of comfort-zone to talk to those people we claim to care about the most.

Don't buy into the lie that as long as a person is religious, that that is good enough. Don't assume that if a person claims a particular denomination, that they understand how they can receive the gift of pardon. Don't buy into the lie that our beliefs are personal and should never be shared in public for fear of offending anyone. The truth is that salvation is free for the asking but accepting that truth is the hard part for a lot of people. The truth is our works don't save us, but they should point other people to Christ, as we are His ambassadors in this life.

The world will tell you that the true issues are in the here and now, not that 'pie in the sky' phony-baloney stuff that may or may not be true...and even if it is, it's not free, you have to earn it...and once you earn it, that is personal, and you should keep it to yourself. But Christ says...

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." **Matthew 5:14-16**

Wandering Stars

In Defense of the Faith

Tuesday, June 19, 2012

Pete Garcia

"No one sets out to become an apostate - it's never the result of one abrupt, drastic turn away from the Lord. Instead, apostasy is most often the product of a pattern of sinful compromises that harden and gradually steer a professing believer away from the truth." John MacArthur

I have to admit something up front. I have a kind of strange fascination with watching late night televangelists, particularly those who focus on taking your money rather than preaching the word of God. Granted, I know these are theological vultures who circle over the scripturally illiterate, but I don't really watch it to see them per se, but to see the people that sit there and listen to this rubbish as if they were gleaned some deep, spiritual truth. I'm always thinking...don't these people actually read their Bibles?

"For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17)

It's always the same message over and over and it goes something like this... "If you have enough faith to sow a seed of ____ \$\$\$, then God will bless you tenfold". The Inspiration Channel presents a show like "Campmeeting" who spend 99% of their time using Scripture to bilk the viewer from their money. They also run commercials that help you set your Will up, so in the event of your death, they can still take your money. As ridiculous as many of these ministries seem to those of us who know better, they are able to bilk millions of dollars from millions of people every year. Their 'get-rich quick' schemes are appealing to a society and economy in decline, and millions get duped every year.

These so-called teachers always hover around certain passages of Scripture: Jesus feeding the 5,000; the talents; and the mustard seed parable. They always take the passage out of context and apply it to some financial application. Their focus is always laser like in precision, and it always points directly at you (the viewer) sending them, money, too demonstrate YOUR faith, in which then God (like a genie) will then act to reward you (\$\$\$) so you can get 'blessed' (ie...wealthy). Sound familiar?

But Peter said to him,

"Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!" Acts 8:20 NIV

Now, the late-night televangelists are pretty easy to spot for a born-again blood-bought believer, in whom the Holy Spirit acts as a discernor of the truth for you. And I'll add a caveat here, in that we should support the poor, and our local ministries. But when these television ministers are living lavishly, while their average 'seed-sower' is borderline poverty, something is rotten in Denmark. Here is the 2011 Donor-alert list that exposes just a handful of these questionable organizations. A good measuring stick for discerning the various doctrines of ministries out there is:

Do you see it in the life of Jesus?

Do you see it in the early church in Acts?

Did Paul or the Apostles teach it in their epistles?

Beware these who lull you into a false sense of security. They may not openly beg for money, but they preach a watered down, lukewarm message that appeals to all, and offends no one. They throw in a scripture here or there for good measure, but there is no meat in their message.

Beware those that present Scripture in a manner that raises red-flags in your spirit, no matter how well articulated or presented. Generally, they will take what is common sense passage and repackage it to fit some hidden or 'new' truth they are attempting to pass off as doctrine.

Beware of the purpose-driven, social-gospel churches, which are fixated on feeding the stomach, but not the soul.

I miss the preachers of old. They were mighty proclaimers of the Gospel in whom the Lord raised up, unafraid to declare truth to power unto a wayward generation. Men like CH Spurgeon, Harry Ironside, Billy Sunday, CA Criswell, J. Vernon McGee, Oswald Chambers, AW Tozier, CS Lewis, and CI Scofield have been called Home to Glory.

In their absence, and with each passing generation, fewer men have come forward to preach the Gospel. Less influential on their societies than their predecessors, their voices over the years have continued to be drowned out by calls to conform to the new social norm. The temptation to depart the ministry in search of a more lucrative adventures seem overwhelmingly appealing to many. Many have been forced out of the ministry due to scandal or infidelity. It appears that either a dwindling number of men have heard the calling, or an increasing number of them have come to ignore it.

They stand far from the naked, whipped body of our Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross. They want nothing to do with an innocent man who hung in our stead, bearing our shame. The successful ministries today stand far from the bloodstained Gospel of a crucified Messiah. Nor do they want to preach of that same man resurrected, promising to return.

These merchants of ministry are more concerned with book sales and crowd size, rather than seeing souls saved and lives transformed. They don't talk about the return of Christ, because they no longer believe it. It would also get people focused on Jesus Christ rather than them, and there isn't enough room in the church for the both of them.

"These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." (Jude 1:12-13)

And if it seems as if I'm only going after the clergy, it is only because it seems that way. Often times, the parishioner's are just as guilty. Collectively, we've become comfortable with people feeding the Bible to us, rather than searching it out ourselves. We've grown comfortable with men tickling our ears, rather than facing a hard truth that the Christian life can be difficult, and

we have to rely on God's timing rather than our own. Due to their popularity, they have truly come to believe the lies they are peddling.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." Amos 8:11-12

Shortly after Amos penned these words, Israel embarked on 400 years stretch of silence, when neither priest nor prophet rose up to give the inspired Word of God. Only time transpired, in which God's prophetic word played out as prophesied by Daniel, in which one successive Gentile nation after another dominated Israel.

Interestingly, by the time Christ came, there was such a lack of belief that a Messiah would actually come, that the Wise Magi were looked at as more of a crazy curiosity, than men on a mission whom the religious leadership surrounding King Herod should take seriously. Notice, none of the religious Pharisees went with them on that last 5-mile stretch to Bethlehem to find the one "born King of the Jews".

Here we are today, 2,000 years removed from the life of Christ, and for the better part of a century, the religious leadership of the mainline denominations scoff at the idea of taking the Bible seriously. They scoff at the inerrancy of Scripture. They scoff at the idea that Christ will literally return.

The attack on the inerrancy of scriptures began in Europe in the 1800's within Protestantism and spread to American seminaries during the 2nd Great Awakening. It appears that anytime there is a revival in a nation, Satan counters with a flood of false doctrine that seeks to divide, confuse, and water down the influential power of the Gospel message.

When clergy no longer believed the Bible, they taught from, they no longer believed the promises either. The prophecies therein were diminished by allegorizing or symbolizing them. That vacuum within the evangelical communities and the invention of the television, opened up opportunities for these theological vultures to swoop in and line their pockets at the expense of a scripturally illiterate people. It is all about getting "Your Best Life Now" instead of dying to self, and living for Christ.

What is truly sad about all this is that these men and women deceptively use the Scriptures to achieve personal gain. Countless people have been used and betrayed, swearing off Christianity forever. Many have lost their life's savings, homes, innocence, and have had their families torn apart on account of these merchants of ministry. Let us lift up prayers for those hurt in these situations and pray that God will lift the veil of bitterness from their eyes and the healing power of the truth of His Word and the power of His blood.

"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears." Acts 20:29-31

A Cup of Trembling

In Defense of the Faith
Tuesday, June 26, 2012
Pete Garcia

"As long as what you are afraid of is something evil, you may still hope that the good may come to your rescue. But suppose you struggle through to the good and find that it also is dreadful? How if food itself turns out to be the very thing you can't eat, and home the very place you can't live, and your very comforter the person who makes you uncomfortable? Then, indeed, there is no rescue possible: the last card has been played." -C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*

This once great nation we live in had become at the cost of much bloodshed and personal sacrifice, the very pinnacle of mankind's experiment in liberty and personal freedom. No other nation in the history of nations shared what we have in a constitutional republic that guaranteed our rights and liberties not by a government of men, but by God our Creator.

Our wealth was legendary, our dreams limitless, and our military might a fearsome thing to behold indeed. But like every other great nation and empire before us, we too have fallen prey to our own luxuries and false sense of security. Many pray that God will restore this nation to its former greatness, but when exactly was that? We look back with fondness as if only we could return to a simpler age, but the truth is, there has always been sin and violence in our nation. The Divine Hand that once sheltered our nation has been withdrawn, and only the shadow of His retreat remains.

Religion Can't Save Us

Where was the denominational church 150 years ago, when liberal humanists began infiltrating our seminaries and pulpits, sowing the seeds of corruption amongst generations of future ministers? Why didn't Christians then stand up and take these parasites out when they were more of a nuisance, than the existential threat they are today? Remember how the deeds of the Nicolaitans, soon became their doctrine?

Tragically, we have within American 'Christendom' become comfortable with sin, introduced by something that is called incrementalism. We prided ourselves in a false sense of knowledge that we were more enlightened than all those generations before us by what we were willing to tolerate, rather than what we would not. Today, the denominational churches struggle with even the most basic, fundamental doctrines that used to be a self-evident, such as the inerrancy of Scriptures and the Deity of Christ. Now churches are debating (and acquiescing) on whether homosexuals can be pastors and whether Bibles should even be re-written so not to offend Moslems. Astonishingly, our nation is still considered by the rest of the world as a "Christian" nation, mainly because of the numbers of our citizens who claim one particular denomination or another, not because they are truly born-again believers in Jesus Christ.

So as a "Christian nation", where was the church in safeguarding our children's future against the onslaught of Marxists propaganda such as atheism, political correctness, evolution, eugenics, and euthanasia that has been openly promoted in our public education system even unto this day? A human isn't a human made in the image of God anymore, but rather an evolved product of primordial pond scum who is here by happenstance. Is there any wonder why as a society, have no issues turning a fetus from a human being into a 'choice'? If even the

most innocent among us is fair game, then what does that say about the inner-city gang banger, or the random citizen who was unfortunate enough to have been in the wrong place, at the wrong time? Is there any wonder why suicide is skyrocketing amongst our soldiers when all they've ever been taught is that we are here by accident, and there is nothing after this life?

Where has the church been in defending the institution of marriage? Is it any surprise that homosexuals today seek to redefine what we as a society, have long since deemed disposable? What leg does the American public have to stand on in the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) when over 50% of American marriages end in divorce?

Morality Can't Save Us

The most moral, devoutly religious nation or people to have ever existed... crucified their Messiah, along with their Gentile overlords 2,000 years ago. Our morality would not, and could not save us...because our righteousness could never even come close to what God said we would need to meet His perfect standard. Our salvation rests solely in the man Jesus Christ, who as God, departed Heaven and robed Himself in flesh to live that perfect life that you and I could never do.

Hitler, Stalin and Mao...all wretched despots whose histories were written by the blood of their citizens...pale in comparison to ours. The only difference being that our sacrifices are not laid on the altar of political ideologies or for the 'motherland', but rather on the altar of convenience. Fifty million abortions later into our 39-year judicial redefinition of life in 1973, and we have placed plenty of innocent blood on our hands as a society.

I'm speaking mainly to those who think just because we are American's, we've earned some special status in the grand scheme of things and have somehow replaced Israel as the 'God's Chosen Nation' simply because we are the land of the free and home of the brave. As a nation, we have some seriously flawed issues that God in times past, made examples of other nations as what not to do. Why are we any different? We have conquered and taken land (Indians), we've traded in slavery, and we've fought both just and unjust wars, only to become the world's greatest exporter of every evil imagination possible. Our morality is no longer based on the Word of God, but has become a moving target of moral relativism, based solely on the subjective whims of what has come into fashion at any given period of time.

Political Solutions Can't Save Us

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." **Genesis 12:3**

"The borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states," the president said..."The Palestinian people must have the right to govern themselves and reach their potential in a sovereign and contiguous state." **President Obama** (source)

Our nation's very political existence and prominence today is because of our support and standing with the nation Israel. Had President Truman not supported Israel's declaration of statehood back in 1948, I doubt very seriously we would be where we are as a nation today. But each subsequent administration since Truman has acquiesced more and more to the Islamic nations on account of cheap oil, until we have our current administration that are all but rigging

the geo-political landscape in favor Israel's enemies. According to the Scriptures, Israel will stand alone in the last days, and that is evident in that both Republican and Democratic administrations have begun pushing Israel harder and harder to come up with a peace plan that ALWAYS ends up dividing Israel and/or Jerusalem, and never any of Israel's neighbors. How does the promise God gave Abraham apply any less today, than it did 4,000 years ago?

For thus says the Lord of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. **Zechariah 2:8**

Consider our blessings as a nation for standing by Israel all these years. Now our blessings are not predicated on the number true Christians in our nation, as there are true Christians in every nation. The proof of my statement is in the fact that persecution against the Body of Christ exists all around the world. Our blessings as a nation come from our willingness to stand with Israel, which fulfilled God's plan for bringing them out of a 1900-year Diaspora into their own land. Had our nation not sided with Israel, or if we come to some future arrangement when we turn our back against Israel, we too will break ourselves into pieces. (Bill Koenig has done an excellent job chronicling all this up to this day)

How do I feel that we as a nation are racing toward the edge of a cliff? It makes me sad, not because I want America to go back to what it was (which even at our best, still didn't meet God's standard), but because this whole tragedy is all so preventable, had we only taken God at His word. Either we will reap judgment upon ourselves because of the worldly godlessness we so desperately seek to embrace, or because we are doing the one nation-ending-deed God promised us would happen when we start to mess with Israel.

"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." **Zechariah 12:2-3**

Seeing that our nation is utterly headed in the wrong direction, and that our religion, morality, and political persuasions can't save us anymore today than they could 100 years ago, what then should we as Christians living in the last days place our hope in?

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 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 2:11-14**

The Black Swan

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, July 03, 2012

Pete Garcia

Probably the three most contentious points of scripture are the Creation, Jesus Christ's first advent, and His Second Advent. These have been under more attack, by more agencies both inside and out of Christendom than almost any other. The truth is, very few people believe in an actual literal return of our Lord and Savior. It is more akin to that bumper sticker I've seen from time to time that states: Jesus is coming back, look busy.

The "Black Swan Event/Theory" was put forth by a man named Nassim Taleb, who is a Lebanese American that studies randomness and probability. His book "The Black Swan" is listed as one of the top 12 most influential books since World War II. He applies statistics and applied mathematics to the probability of events that have occurred and/or to the likeliness that they could occur. I came to understand it (in laymen's terms) to be an unexpected event that should have been seen coming but couldn't because nothing like it had ever happened before.

From Wikipedia:

The **black swan theory** or **theory of black swan events** is a metaphor that describes an event that is a surprise (to the observer), has a major impact, and after the fact is often inappropriately rationalized with the benefit of hindsight.

The theory was developed by Nassim Nicholas Taleb to explain:

1. The disproportionate role of high-impact, hard-to-predict, and rare events that are beyond the realm of normal expectations in history, science, finance and technology
2. The non-computability of the probability of the consequential rare events using scientific methods (owing to the very nature of small probabilities)
3. The psychological biases that make people individually and collectively blind to uncertainty and unaware of the massive role of the rare event in historical affairs

An example I've seen used in this, is that there is a turkey that, for a 1000 days is fed, sheltered, and cared for. On the 1000th day, he (the turkey) finds himself on the chopping block, because that 1000th day just happened to be Thanksgiving. So to the farmer, it was a 'white swan' event because he knew all along that this was the fate of that turkey; to the turkey, a 'black swan' event because he didn't see it coming.

In the Scriptures, we can see this played out in the life of Noah and the prophetic event known as the Flood. Out of the millions (possibly billions) of people on the planet at the time, not one person outside of his family believed him. Can you imagine the faith and perseverance that he must have had to continue to build decade after decade on an enormous boat, warning them about a coming judgment in the form of rain, in which no one had ever seen before. To the world that was then, this was the mother of all 'black swan' events, but only because they rejected God's message and His messenger. The Apostle Peter ties that event (the flood), with the return of Christ and the same type of mentality people have concerning both events.

...knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. **2 Peter 3:3-6**

The King James Version has the underlined phrase "they are willingly ignorant of" which paints a clearer picture of the type of mindset that those who reject God's word, have to become. They have to purpose in their heart to ignore, pervert, or outright reject the message of warning because they don't want to deal with it. See, there are no 'black swan' events to God. God, who exists outside of space and time, can simultaneously, see the beginning and the end, and all that is in between.

So back to the original statement, in that the three most contentious points in Scripture. Let me preface this by saying that the first thing that had to go out the window was the Inerrancy of Scripture. Once supposed theologians (change agents) were able to insert some doubt into God's word as to what we can take literally and what is 'questionable', the rest was downhill. It began by attacking the Genesis account of Creation. The western civilization was just entering the 'Age of Reason' and neither the Roman Catholic nor the Protestant churches were able to answer the hard questions pertaining to our beginning.

The next resurgent attack came on the personhood of Jesus Christ and whether He really was who He said He was. The current popular heresy floating around now days is that Jesus was really a woman named Judith Christ. And there are groups of supposed theologians out there that have debated as to what Christ really said, and what others have attributed Him to saying. There are the 'Red Letter Christians' who selectively pick and choose that which they consider the real Bible, while ignoring Paul's and the other Apostles teachings as 'too divisive' to be useful.

Lastly, there is the eschatology and return of Jesus Christ. There was though, a movement in the 1800's called the "Dispensationalists" who, based solely off taking a literal reading of God's word, could and did accurately forecast what would have to happen before we entered that 'last generation'. Men like Darby, Scofield, Larkin, and Chafer viewed the unfulfilled prophetic passages as 'futuristic' since there had been no prior fulfillment of these events in historical records.

One of those events was the reestablishment of Israel as a nation. To the rest of the world, this was a 'black swan' event since Israel had not been a nation in almost 2,000 years. But, since these 'Dispensationalists' were taking God at His literal word; it wasn't a matter of 'if' it could happen, but when. Again, the Apostle Peter reassures us that we have a 'more sure word of prophecy' in His word, than even Peter himself who had seen Christ's Transfiguration first hand.

For most of the Age of the Church (from Augustine until 1948), both majorities of Protestant and Catholic churches were Amillennial...i.e....that there was no future millennial reign of Christ on the earth as stated in Isaiah 65, Daniel 2, Psalm 2, and Revelation 20. So, when Israel became a nation again, it forced these churches to address their traditions in light of current events. For many who adhered to Amillennialism, they embraced 'Replacement Theology'. In doing so, they became 'willingly ignorant' of God's promises to the nation of Israel and of the distinctions between Israel and the Church.

Aside from the outright rejection of Israel as a sign that the end of the age is drawing to a close, there have been numerous 'theories' as to when and how Christ should (or not) return for His Church. I think this is part of a 'divide and conquer' method of attack by Satan on the Church at large, to introduce confusion and ultimately, disillusionment with the nearness of His return. I've talked to a large number of Christians who have heard so many different viewpoints about when and how Christ will return, that they've just thrown their hands up in the air and have said "Whatever". They've become 'pan-millennialist' in their eschatology (it will all pan out in the end, so why bother). It is a sad state of affairs when a large portion of the professing Church either doesn't know or doesn't care when their Savior is set to return.

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, **you** have no need that I should write to **you**. **For you yourselves** know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But **you**, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake **you** as a thief. **You** are all sons of light and sons of the day. **We** are not of the night nor of darkness. **1 Thessalonians 5:1-5**

Notice the shifts between the second person and third person grammatical usages of 'you', 'they', and 'them'? We, who have been born again into the Body of Christ, can take solace and comfort in the fact that our God has not left us to wade wearily into an unknown future. We can know what is coming, because He has put it in His word to us. The Rapture of the Church will be the ultimate 'Black Swan' event for this world because they too have rejected God's message and His messengers. Like the doomed Antediluvian world, that day and hour will come like a 'thief in the night' and will wreak havoc on an already stressed system. But we, as instructed, should watch, and be ready so as not to be caught off guard. And even though we don't know the exact day and hour, we should know the season we are in because of the signs of the times.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day —and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. **2 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)**

Thy Kingdom Come

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, July 10, 2012

Pete Garcia

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10

How many of us long for the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? How many of us long for the day when our bodies will be transformed into its final, eternal, glorified state that no longer falls prey to sickness and disease? Or the day when we no longer seek to appease the lusts of the flesh, which works contrary to the Holy Spirit, dwelling inside us? How much time do we spend staring up into the sky and wondering...maybe today?

Do we long to look into the face of our Creator? My favorite moment of the day is when I come home and step through the front door and see my children and that flash of recognition and happiness that comes across their face as they realize that Daddy is home. Yet, I am but a tent of

flesh that is in a fallen state of disrepair, yet I am able to love my wife and kids with a depth that I am hardly able to adequately put into words. How much greater will that moment be when we, having not yet seen, but having believed all these years, finally get to behold the face of our perfect and righteous Heavenly Father?

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and **hastening** the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:10-12)

The word 'hastening' in these verses by Peter, point to an interesting and often overlooked idea that we can somehow speed up or accelerate God the Father's decision to send His only Beloved Son to come for His Bride the Church. We often think that God already has that day set in stone. I'll caveat this by saying I understand the immutability of God, and that God is omniscient. He already knows when because He can see the end from the beginning. God does not change, and by that I mean His nature, purpose, and attributes are unchangeable. What we don't know is how that fits in with the overall plan; yet we are still instructed to pray unceasingly. We pray for various situations everyday, hoping that God will intervene in which He often times does. But consider these moments in Biblical history for a second, when God altered His reaction to the actions of those people involved.

To Unrighteousness:

So the Lord said,

"If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." (Genesis 18:26)

Abraham, in bargaining with the Lord on behalf of Lot and his family, sought in an increasingly lower number of righteous people in the plain's cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Since history records that those cities were in fact, destroyed, obviously there were not enough righteous persons anywhere in the vicinity that would qualify the Lord from withholding judgment from those cities. Although His judgment came, He did remove the righteous before that day. And it came to pass...

"...when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt." (Genesis 19:29)

To Unbelief:

In Numbers 13-14, the Israelites were sent by God through Moses to go spy out a land flowing with 'milk and honey' in which would be given over to them. The twelve spies sent into Canaan, came back in great despair at the discovery of the giants that currently inhabited the same land. Of the twelve spies sent, all but two reported that it was a hopeless endeavor. But because of their unbelief, even after witnessing all the miracles and wonders by God first-hand in their deliverance from Egypt, they were consigned to wander the desert for forty years until that

faithless generation died out. Only Caleb, Joshua, and those under the age of 20 were allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

To Belief:

In the 7th Century BC, Jonah walked through the streets of Nineveh proclaiming, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Nineveh's inhabitants were an exceedingly wicked and violent people. So their response came as a surprise to Jonah. Everyone, from the king down to the lowliest of people responded and...

"...the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them." (Jonah 3:5)

And God's response was...

"Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it." (Jonah 3:5,10 NKJV)

Hastening the Day:

Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, penned the words that speak to God's desire that we, as born again believers, do play a role in how soon He will return for us. For instance, when I'm at work, I tend to get caught up in it and lose track of time. But increasingly, as my 6 year old daughter has learned to use the phone, has taking up calling me and asking when I'm going to come home. Granted, there still might be work to do at the office, but it brings to mind the desire my children have for me to be there where they are. It tugs at my heart, and I begin to look for ways to cut my time short there at work, so that I can head home sooner. I believe the concept of the principle works the same here. But instead of Jesus coming to be where we are, He is coming to take us to be where He is (John 14:1-3).

In our earnest desire to seek God, we simultaneously seek His Kingdom as well, in where we will finally dwell in righteousness and peace in a world made right. We groan along with the rest of creation, in wanting the balance to be restored as to the way it should be, not to the way it has been these last six millennia. We groan for our final and eternal glorification, in which sin and darkness no longer find safe harbor.

I believe that in our prayers of 'Abba Father' as we cry out to God, His heart hearkens to the multitude of voices that have cried in increasing fervor over the ages for His return. There is so much heartache and misery here on earth, and our time here has been marked by so much abuse and darkness by the forces of this world that it does not go unnoticed. And as each generation goes by, our anticipation for our Lord's return grows stronger and more desperate as we see that Day approaching.

The Apostle John, after having walked with Christ in His earthly ministry, was taught how to pray the Lord's Prayer. He was eyewitness to the crucifixion and the resurrection. Afterwards, he helped spread the gospel by penning scripture, planting churches and making disciples. And in his final years, while imprisoned on the isle of Patmos, he witnesses the glorified Christ and is overwhelmed almost to the point of death. He is then given the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ and

becomes an eyewitness to the final things that are to come upon this earth. Jesus comforts him and us with these parting words...

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."

And John, having seen the magnitude of the things to come, closes the Revelation with the very same words that we here in this last generation have taken increasing comfort in, not knowing the day or hour, but recognizing the season we are in say as well...

"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Revelation 22:20

Remember the Titans?

Prophecy - Signs

Tuesday, July 17, 2012

Pete Garcia

"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." Genesis 6:4

Before they fell, it is believed that Adam and Eve were once shrouded in something akin to the Shekinah glory. It wasn't until they fell that they recognized their nakedness, and hid themselves in the Garden. Sewing fig leaves together was a poor attempt, but God was gracious in providing them the skins from an animal to cover themselves. In this example, an innocent animal was killed to cover their shame.

Since the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, mankind has long sought-after immortality that was once ours. It is in this endeavor that mankind was once punished for, and through the long road of humanity from then until now, we have once again crossed the threshold of fundamentally transforming what it means to be human.

Much excellent work has been written by numerous Bible teachers and scholars over the years, concerning the passages found within Genesis 6:1-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; 2 Peter 2:4, 5; and Jude 6-7. These contain some of the most fascinating and intriguing statements found anywhere in the Bible as to the nature and occurrence of the mysterious Nephilim.

In some translations, the word Nephilim has been translated to the word "giant." People reading these picture huge human beings. But the word in Hebrew does not mean giants, rather, it means, "fallen ones." The word does not refer to giants in the sense of huge beings, but to a race of fallen ones. Many people (yours truly included) believe these were literal angels who fell with Satan when he attempted a coup d'état against God. The reason why we have come to understand it as giant is because the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament done around 250 B.C. by Jewish scholars) translated verse 4 into the Greek word gigantes, which means "Titan." Our English word "giant" comes from this Greek word, gigantes. (Ariel Ministries)

Closed Circuit

When thinking about the human race, one way to understand it is as racecars on a closed racetrack. All the cars have the same basic structure and functionality i.e....four wheels, engines, fuel requirements, and someone to drive them. If the loop is closed, then only the cars currently on the track can race. The cars can hit the pit stop; change tires, fuel up, and some minor cosmetic touch ups...but basically, the cars that are there are the only ones in the race.

What is fascinating about Genesis 6 is that it introduces the idea that a new kind of vehicle was introduced into an already existing race. A hybrid that was different and distinct from the rest of those on the racetrack. For that to be possible, then an outside source had to have made this happen.

Humanity has over the millennia crossbred over and over into many different variations that hardly any one particular race can be considered 'pure'. Physical variations of all types have arisen within the human type. Abnormalities in the makeup of the human race include those of extreme height or shortness, identical twins, and physical deformities and hereditary disease. All these are what we come to accept as normal to the extent that they happen to be contained within the human race.

Multiplication

The command to both Adam and Noah was to 'be fruitful and multiply' in order to repopulate the earth, and have not to this day, ever been rescinded. Regardless of nationality, ethnicity, height, weight, eye/hair/skin color, we humans have the ability to interbreed, with our offspring taking DNA from both the father and the mother to create a new variation that mixes the two.

Since, from what we know of Adam, was that he was a direct creation of God, as was Eve, and they were perfect. The title, "Son(s) of God" were only given in scriptures to those persons who were direct creation of God. Adam, the angels, and Jesus Christ were called 'Son(s) of God'. We born-again believers fall into this same category as God has given us new life through Jesus Christ and are considered 'new creations' in the sight of God.

But since Adam and Eve, every person from that moment forward, was pro-generated physically from the original model. Therefore, Adam and Eve would have had the DNA of every different kind of person that would ever be conceived, built into their DNA structure that would serve as the ultimate gene-pool source.

That means that any aberrations of this, outside of what is normal for a human, can only come from outside that which is human. The question then is asked, if Angels are spirits, how could they physically mate with a human female? We know from numerous passages (Genesis 18: 1-3, 22; 19; Ps 78:25; Hebrews 13:2) that Angels could assume human form, and interact with people in a physical manner. For instance, the angel messengers dragged Lot to safety outside of Sodom just prior to judgment. Assuming that this holds true for fallen angels, they too should be able to manifest themselves into physical bodies. Having witnessed Creation, they would probably have an enlightened knowledge of not only the human body, but how the universe works.

The Age of Conscience

So the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” Genesis 4:6-7

In this Dispensation after the Fall and before the Flood, man SHOULD know what right is, and do it. Genesis 6 therefore recaps the 1560 years since Adam’s fall resulting in worldwide wickedness and violence. This also, appears to be the source for Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman mythologies in which gods, Titan’s (half man/half god), giants, and monsters of all varieties, seem to stem from. My question was, if God is omniscient and omnipotent, ‘declaring the end from the beginning’, why did He allow a race of human-angel hybrids to come into being with the distinct foreknowledge that they were destined to destruction?

My only answer is that Satan was still peddling the idea that man could be as a god. Since there was no Law or Bible written, interactions of the supernatural kind were more commonplace then after the Flood. God, in His infinite love for mankind, accommodated man’s free will, and this is something mankind embraced during that specific age. The ramifications then of that free will choice, was that they had so polluted their blood-lines, that God had no choice but to destroy humanity in order to save humanity. Only Noah and his family made it through the Flood, who God said was ‘perfect in his generations’. (Genesis 6:9)

What we know of the Antediluvians was that they were highly intelligent and skilled beyond modern capabilities in areas of metallurgy, architecture, and weaponry. As Noah and his family were the only ones to go through and survive the flood, there would have been a ‘technological’ setback unlike anything we could really fathom today, aside from suffering an EMP attack. From the Fall of Adam, till the Flood, mankind not only was genetically more perfect then we are today, but also lived hundreds of years. Imagine all that Albert Einstein could have accomplished, had he lived for several more centuries?

We know according to 1 Peter 3:18-20; 2 Peter 2:4-5; and Jude 6-7, that the fallen angels who fell and intermingled with the ‘daughters of men’ were cast into permanent confinement in a place known as the ‘pits of darkness’ or Tartarus, and are awaiting judgment for their atrocities against God and the human race. It seems highly unlikely that any fallen angels (demons) thereafter would likely volunteer freely interact with mankind again of that magnitude, considering the consequences, although the Bible does record giants after the time of the Flood.

The Age of Reason

In fact, in Luke 8:31, the demons within the possessed man known to us as ‘Legion’, dreaded even the thought of temporary confinement of going into the Abyss, which we know according to Revelation 9, those angels led by Abaddon, will be released back into the world at the 5th Trumpet Judgment during the Tribulation. I think it was (and still is) the harshness of the punishment that prevents them from freely intermingling with our kind today.

Since then, demons have seemingly been only allowed to ‘possess’ a person, working through them rather than attempting to pollute humanity with something that is neither fully human nor fully angelic, rendering them soul-less. Yet, it states there in Genesis 6:4 that there was a second iteration of this interference, which I believe has not yet happened. There is a similarity that I would like to tie in here in reference to the Holy Spirit’s ministry amongst mankind.

And the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." Genesis 6:3

The marked increase since 1948 in the extra-terrestrials, strange sounds, UFO's, animal deaths, technological advances, ghosts and the paranormal all seem to point to something that is coming, but not yet understood by the general public. This may contend with the idea that it's not just giants that the ancient Israelites had to contend with in that 'and also afterwards' statement. Remember, Nephilim mean's 'fallen ones' and it is in their reintroduction at the end of the age that could produce such amazing 'signs and wonders that if possible, even the elect would be deceived. It also could account for a leap forward in technology that has up until now hampered man's ability to go completely cashless and implement the mark of the beast system.

The fascination with aliens, global invasions, genetic alterations, singularity, and the paranormal all point to a conditioning we have been subjugated too by the godless Hollywood and media types that will 'take the edge off' when our otherworldly visitors actually do make their presence known. It's hidden from us now, but at some point, in the not too distant future, these interlopers will shake off the dust of their 'mythos' and take this planet by a storm.

"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." Matthew 24:37

Ready, Fire, Aim!

Perspective on the News

Thursday, July 26, 2012

Pete Garcia

"All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near. Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him." - Sun Tzu, the Art of War

It's hard being an American these days. Not just with all the current craziness going on around the world, but because it feels like the doors to the nuthouse has been left unlocked and the loons have not only escaped, but they're in charge and making all the rules. The radicals from the 60s and 70s are now the professors, the media, and the politicians.

I'm having a difficult time with the unsettling reality of how much classified information is leaving the secret confines of the White House, to being splashed across the front pages of national major newspapers. Let me rephrase that...I'm not having a difficult time believing that someone within the upper echelons of our government would do it; I'm having a hard time believing that something hasn't already been done to stop it. Not only should someone have already staunched this free-flow of classified information, but also we have the "watchdog's" of the government actively covering up the spillage by a willing accomplice, the treasonously liberal media. Where is the media outrage? Anyone remember Valerie Plame? I guess the liberal media outrage is only reserved for sitting Republican presidents. I mean, that was nothing compared to what is getting leaked these days.

Remember how President Bush took a bloody, brutal beating by the liberal press and Congress over our forces not finding any WMD's during the initial invasion to Iraq? Guess what, where did Bashar Al Assad get all of poisonous toys? That's right, when Saddam knew that the invasion was going to happen, he sent them packing to Syria. But even though he knew where they went too, President Bush didn't kowtow to the media or a hostile Congress. For all of his faults, at least President Bush had backbone.

ABC, NBC, CNN, MSNBC, New York Times, Washington Post, and so many others, have willingly printed classified information for profit and politics sake, and have actively ignored the leaking thereof. Either they are actively seeking the destruction of the United States as a Constitutional Republic, or they are just too ignorant to realize what the ramifications would be once this tidal wave of confidentiality is laid open for all to see. Seeing that within our Congress, there are 70 members who are self-professed Socialists (source), it's not surprising that the media have insider help who are actively attempting to move us away from our founding as a representative Republic, to a socialist democracy.

Remember that kid in fifth grade you used to know...the one you told a secret too and who then turned around and told everyone else in school? How many times did you go back and confide in said blabbermouth? Probably never again if you had any sense about you. Our tactics, our national secrets on how we conduct direct and indirect operations around the world have been openly confirmed for all our enemies for the sake of political advancement in an election year.

Our allies, who have in confidence, relied on us to keep their secrets, have had their secrets 'shared' around the world. Who will trust us now? How can we expect someone from (name the country) to put their neck on the line and provide us intelligence that safeguards our nation, when they know, that not only will we spill the beans about the who-what-when-where-why, but we also will not come to their aid when they do get caught?

Remember PFC Bradley Manning? A Private in the Army who supposedly leaked some 750,000 classified documents to the nefarious Wiki leaks founder, Julian Assange back in 2010. Currently, he is serving an undetermined but projected indefinite jail sentence, and possibly the death sentence for his traitorous actions. So how different is what Manning did to what is now currently being done now on an almost weekly basis?

But what does that tell the average soldier when the current administration can no more keep our nation's secrets, than can Lindsay Lohan stay out of jail?

Our ability as a nation to fight our enemies absolutely **DEPENDS** on us being able to conduct covert warfare and not telegraph our every intention to our enemies. The safety of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines depends on our leadership being discrete about our military capabilities. It's knowing what to say, and what not to say, that shows the rest of the world the hand we are holding. Most politicians and bureaucratic staffers have never served, so it isn't their neck that is being put out there on the line. War is unpredictable, our leadership's intent and competency shouldn't be.

Burning Bridges

Our entry into Afghanistan back in 2001 was predicated on the idea that we (as a nation) would not allow our enemies to find safe haven anywhere in the world. The natures of both the Afghanistan and Iraq wars since then have evolved over time from strategic strikes into protracted, bloody counter-insurgency operations that have dragged on for over 10 years now. Why 10 years? Nobody trusts us. The ones who did, we've burned and/or made public spectacles for doing so. (Think Kurds)

Aside from our multi-layered betrayal of the Kurdish people, we've now come to turning on our allies (and ourselves) with some regularity.

- the British to the Russians.
- the Israelis to the Iranians.
- the Iranian public to the Iranian leadership.
- President Mubarak to the Muslim Brotherhood.
- the Israelis to the Muslim Brotherhood.
- Federal Agents to Mexican Cartels.

Soldiers and officers in the military have to swear an oath to protect and defend, **NOT** the sitting President of the United States (although he is the Commander in Chief), but the Constitution of the United States. Here is a copy of the Commissioning Oath:

"I, (name), having been appointed to the (rank) in the United States Army, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation

freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the office upon which I am about to enter. So help me God.”

Does ‘all enemies’ include the treasonous liberal press who regularly out our nation’s most sensitive secrets at the behest of corrupt politicians? Does it include politicians who care more about their elections than those service men and women who sacrifice everything for this nation? Does it include members of Congress who are actively seeking to undermine the Constitution to the point of irrelevance? It is the credibility of OUR nation that is at stake. It is our reputation that is being thrashed about like a dog shaking a rag doll. When America is on the ropes and our neck is on the line...who will come to our aid?

Prophetic Perspective

In a stark and sobering sense of irony, there is no United States of America in the Bible’s description of the last days. The largest “Christian nation” in the world does not even warrant a whisper during the end times. That is not to say, there isn’t descriptions of the state of the church in America (and the west) in the Bible, because there are those a-plenty. But between our nations’ insatiable spending habits, socialist-Marxist politicians, apathetic public, and a complicit liberal media all of which come together to concoct a recipe for disaster the likes this nation has never seen. In fact, our nation is at greater peril today than we were during the height of the Civil War.

The enemies to this Constitution are not just from without, but from within. They do not point their muskets at us and threaten to run us through with bayonets, but they chip away and reinterpret our freedoms for political correctness’s sake. Even more damaging, is that they chip away at the credibility of the United States reputation as a beacon of freedom and truth in this dark and violent world. Instead of a Constitutional Republic, the enemies of this nation seek a true democracy. Instead of rights granted by God, they wish us to have rights granted by mob rule no longer etched in stone, but moved about on a whim, to whichever crowd causes enough commotion.

Before the Iron Curtain fell, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, most prophecy and geo-political scholars could only see the demise of the communist superpower with some kind of cataclysmic World War III type event. So when they collapsed from within for political dissent and economic frailty that came as a real shock to almost everyone. The same holds true for us as a nation. Is it impossible? I used to think it was...but I’m not so sure anymore. I think we are just one disaster away from fundamentally transforming into something we were never intended to be. Whether that is a nation ruled by anarchy or by an iron fist, I don’t know. When the current administration invites verifiable terrorists to the White House as guests, and has recently created the Homeland Defense’s checklists of potential threats who’s qualities include American’s who still believe in the Constitution, the world’s greatest constitutional republic has truly gone mad. And why is that...?

“The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the people. It is an instrument for the people to restrain the government lest it come to dominate our lives and interest.” **Patrick Henry**

The God-Shaped Hole

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, July 31, 2012

Pete Garcia

I realize that in the big scheme of things, I am just a small man made of clay. My 38 1/2 years on this blue round ball has not significantly impacted the world, nor have I left some type of indelible mark on the history of mankind.

I am of importance to my family and friends, and to some extent, the organizations I chose to involve myself with, but that is pretty much it. Most of us feel that way, so I am not even unique in that aspect. But for the believer in Jesus Christ, the Bible says that before the world began, God had you in mind.

"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:4-6 NKJV

When we were young, people set goals for us. As we grew up and matured, those goals become our own, until we reach adulthood when we claim 100% ownership of them. What was important to me as a child, now seems outdated and simplistic to the older me these days. Nowadays, I just try and keep my head above water with work, family, and paying bills. Although I became a Christian when I was a young child, I could have gold-medaled in fence riding throughout my adolescent and young adult years. I jumped on and off the fence (on-fire/luke-warm) with such frequency that before long, I wasn't sure whether I was saved anymore or not. I had a conflict of interest, as my head knowledge of Jesus Christ and my heart knowledge were often at odds with each other. I had participated in all the various rituals such as walking the aisle and water baptism, but I didn't possess a life that reflected, what my head professed I was.

The terrible thing about being a lukewarm Christian is that you're never truly happy. You can't be happy in sinful bliss because you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you, convicting you of that sinful bliss. On the other hand, you can't participate in Christian activities with a clean conscience, because you don't have one. In the end, one of two things will happen to you; either you will turn back to God and continue to mature spiritually, or you will continue in sin and harden the Soul against reproof, bringing about stronger and stronger chastisement.

Choose Your Delusions

"So will I choose their delusions, And bring their fears on them; Because, when I called, no one answered, When I spoke they did not hear; But they did evil before My eyes, And chose that in which I do not delight." Isaiah 66:4

In the book of Isaiah, God is chastising the Jewish people for not heeding to His prophets and turning back from their evil ways. They were simply 'going through the motions' when it came to worshipping Him and they were willfully continuing in their sin without any true, heartfelt repentance. So the Lord not only gave them over to their delusions, but gave them over to their

enemies. I know He was speaking to them at that point in their history, but I can't help but notice that a majority of the churches today are guilty of the same exact thing.

We are creatures by design, who were built to worship, because that is what is hard-wired into our systems by God. Now, what we choose to worship is altogether another issue. That depends on whether we worship the one true God, or if we put something else into that void to take His place. The truth is, the things we become passionate about end up consuming us. People will try to fill that void with things, relationships, sports, work, parties, music, sex, politics, drugs, movies, education, etc. But the underlying reason why they end up consuming you is, you are attempting to fill a limitless void with finite things, that only a limitless God could fill.

We can see a recent example of this played out in the Aurora, Colorado shooting. It's not just that James Holmes wanted to be famous and, on the television, because we have whole channels of reality shows dedicated to ridiculous people doing ridiculous things for five fleeting seconds of fame. It's an agonizing emptiness that unsaved people have when they do not have a personal relationship with their Creator. James Holmes simply decided to fill that void with dark forces of a demonic nature, which masquerade themselves today under the guise of entertainment. He modeled himself after a comic book character that was a psychopathic, homicidal clown.

Oh, come on Pete, the Joker was just a comic book character and you are completely overreacting. Don't take my word for it; ask Heath Ledger who became consumed with the demonic character he had to allow himself to become. But not only Heath and James succumbed to tragic end state this always leads one too, but many others have tried to become this persona of homicidal lunacy. How do I know James Holmes was a demonically inspired and possessed man? How else could a man shoot an innocent baby at point blank range? Not to mention all the others killed or injured. A man or woman capable of this has a serious detachment from not only reality, but from a basic understanding of right and wrong.

Before someone is saved, they possess a vacuum within themselves that must be filled with something, and if it's not God, then it will be something or someone from this fallen world. Granted, not every non-believer is a mass murderer in the waiting, but the heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it? That's why we always hear the conversations after these tragedies from the neighbors of these 'random' violent acts and they almost always say... "he was such a nice, quiet man".

Set Your Affections

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:1)

Even Christians, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit from the moment of belief, struggle with this...but in a different way. Christians who fall out of fellowship remain saved, because we are transformed into 'new creation' at the moment of belief. That is an eternal act by an eternal God and can't be undone by our own behaviors, anymore than can a butterfly transform back into a caterpillar simply by crawling up a branch. For the Christian, it's not that hole in our Soul needs to be filled, but it's the relationship (or closeness) with our eternal heavenly Father that we desire.

As children to our parents, we will always remain their children, and they, our parents regardless of our behavior. There is no undoing that whether those actions are good or bad. What we are left with then, is the relationship. Either it is in good standing and healthy, not because of our good behavior, but because of the attitude of our hearts, or it is not. A person's poor standing is also based on the heart's attitude, and if a believer wants to continue in sin, the fleshly will, puts the heart in a state of rebellion, and the heart stands convicted. The guilt comes from the conviction, which if fed, seeks to separate (as much as possible) that relationship we have with our Father.

What follows conviction and guilt is the chastisement, which is God's increasingly measured response to get His children to turn from their ways. What transformed my life was asking God to give me a hunger for His Word. In asking for that, I in effect told the Lord that I seek to know Him better. I asked for that desire earnestly, and the Lord answered yes and blessed me above and beyond what I could have dreamed of. I have become consumed with getting to know a limitless and eternal God through His word, and I have never been more satisfied.

Yet, I'm still a sinner and will continue to stumble and sin probably until either the day I die or am raptured out of this place. The difference now is, I don't like remaining in sin. It feels very unnatural for me, to not be in close fellowship with Jesus. When we set our affections on the things above, we get our eternal perspectives in order, which gets the rest of our lives in order. Our Father in heaven, who has loved us before He created the world, will guide us, and protect us when we fully lean on His understanding. When we trust in ourselves, we end up choosing our own delusions. These delusions are temporary at best, and they never satisfy that desire we have as humans to feel loved and important. Your delusions, whatever they may be, will always fail you, and in the end, separate you eternally from your Creator.

Come then, seek your Maker and find the joy everlasting in the warm embrace of our Father's love.

The Seven Churches

Prophecy - Signs

Tuesday, August 07, 2012

Pete Garcia

We often speak about the imminent return of Christ, as if it could have happened at any point in these last two millennia, without really considering if that were really possible. Could Christ have returned at any point in the past 2,000 years? Or is there a specific time when God the Father will send His Son, Jesus Christ, to return and receive His Bride the Church?

Why wasn't Christ's First Coming in 165 BC, during the Maccabean Revolt? Rome had yet to rise as a great world power and Christ **could** have easily claimed His throne right then and there with little trouble...so why the wait? Maybe the Jews were just as divided on when they thought the Messiah would come then, as we are divided today? Maybe this is why the Jews weren't expecting Yeshua Mashiach when He did arrive around 4 BC. All we know is that by the time Christ did come...no one but a handful of people were still eagerly anticipating Him. (The first and most surprising of which, were Gentiles from the East!)

I'm continually drawn back to the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches found in Revelation 2-3. If these letters do speak to the unfolding ages of the Church, then surely, one of them would be identified as the time when Christ would return a second time to claim His Bride the Church. And if that is the case, the issue isn't so much with the Imminent return of Christ throughout the last 2,000 years, but the Imminent return during one specific time period during the last 2,000 years.

Understanding that not only were these literal churches in John's Day, but because of the order they are placed in and how this has played out over the centuries, we can be fairly certain that these seven (out of the thousands of churches then in John's day) were chosen for a more specific reason than just the problems they were having back then in the 1st century. So let's look specifically at Christ's promise of return and how they applied to each of these churches.

Ephesus: There is no promise to return and remove these Believers from earth, only to remove their candlestick, which is to remove them from being a church for leaving their first love.

Smyrna: The letter to the beloved Smyrnan church offers no promise of escape; only to endure, and suffer through with patience, and their reward would be the Crown of Life.

Pergamos: The promise to return here is not a good promise, but a threat, that if they don't repent, the Lord Himself would come and fight against them. What had been the **deeds** of the Nicolaitan's in Ephesus became to Pergamos, their **doctrine**.

Thyatira: To the Church of Thyatira, Jesus spent most of this letter criticizing them for many things. The promise to return is limited to only those within this church, who does not hold to the Jezebel doctrine nor have sought out the depths of Satan.

Sardis: The promise to return to the church at Sardis was a warning. They no longer watched for His return. That has as much to do with its historical background as it does its with the theological reality of today. Most orthodox churches today do not teach pre-millennial eschatology. IF they do teach it, it's become corrupted by centuries of false teaching that either all the prophecies have already been fulfilled, or that we have to take 'dominion' of the world before Christ 'can' return.

Philadelphia: Out of all the letters, only this one has a promise to remove the Church altogether from this world. The rest of the letters, when taken in context, offer no such promise.

Laodicea: No promise is made by Christ to come, only a severe rebuke and chastening to repent. Christ stands outside this church knocking on the door.

[The dividing line above delineates that the last four churches would in fact overlap each other.]

The Eventuality of Apostasy

If history is any guide, every denomination ultimately ends up in the theological gutter. The key issue always involves a turning away from the literal understanding of the Word of God, and a turning towards embracing the world. Church services went from heartfelt worship to loud, gaudy, theatrical worship productions followed by a sugary message to comfort the masses. The preachers went from preaching the Word to preaching about Social Justice. A growing number of churches have become Seeker Sensitive services trying their very best to please everyone, and not trying to offend anyone.

Mainline churches are bending in all areas of contention with respects to where the biblical standards and modern society clash. The culture war has been heating up on every level of society, and churches all across the fruited plain are falling left and right in order to avoid receiving the heavy-handed media criticism and political abuse that comes to those who take a stand for biblical standards.

Would this have been applicable even 50 years ago? American's then were a lot more respectful to God's Word than they are today. While there was sin back then, (as in every Age) there wasn't this wholesale embracing of the cultural toilet bowl of decadence that we see today.

It's really only been the last 40 years, that we've seen a relentless, systematic assault on all things Christian beginning with the late, angry-atheist Madelyn Murray O' Hare attack of God in the public schools. Then it was on to the "Sexual Revolution" followed quickly by the war on the unborn. The race is now on in redefining terminology with political correctness in such words as: fundamentalist, hate, bigot, and choice.

There Can Only Be One

It is the Philadelphian Church alone who has to endure this rapidly unraveling nature of civilization. While I believe in the Imminency of Christ's return, logically I can only deduce that it would have to be during this window of time that makes up the Philadelphian Age of the Church. Some believe this began at the First Great Awakening, while others believe it started during the Second. This is when the missionaries were sent out around the world to spread the Gospel. Yet, prophetically, in Christ's own words, the least receptive of the Gospel of Jesus

Christ have always been the Jews. But more and more Jews are coming to recognize that Christ was the Messiah, and this were not even possible until 1948 (well into the Philadelphian Age) when Israel became a nation again.

"...For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes." Matt 10:23 NKJV

At no time in western history has more governments worked harder to discredit the Biblical account of creation than today, thanks now to the widely accepted "Theory of Evolution". At no time in history have governments worked harder to remove any mention of the Biblical God from the public arena of ideas as it has today. At no time in history has more societies worked harder to take the fundamentalism out of Christianity through legislation that it deems as 'hate speech'. At no time in history has more the mass media worked harder than it has now, to silence and belittle the Christian.

At no time in mankind's history has the pressure ever been greater, in more places, for the Christian to compromise their beliefs to appease non-Christian religions. At no time in history, has Christendom been as divided as it is today. At no time in history has the pressure ever been greater for all of Christianity to embrace 'ecumenicalism' under the banner of 'peace' and 'Social Justice'.

These are part of the devil's battle tactics, in which he would first cause the Bride of Christ to divide over doctrine and principles. Satan is the author of confusion, and he's been busy doing that for the last 2,000 years. Then, in using cultural flash points such as gay marriage and abortion...he can not only unite Christianity with non-Christian religions, but he can unite the divided denominational churches together under the banner of Ecumenicalism to combat the current social ills. Just remember; homosexual marriage for example, is just a **symptom** of the underlying cultural rot that is just now starting to bubble up to the surface.

Why would Satan unite the Churches? In order for Christians to come together, they would have to set aside their differences... (i.e....the things that make them different). So when you set your principles aside to unite over some cultural battle ...over time and repeatedly enough, you blur the lines and water down your message to the point of luke-warm irrelevance so not to offend those your working together with. No longer is your focus on evangelism, but on whatever the new decadent injustice of the month is.

If you notice the order of the Churches in Revelation 2-3, you see that after the Gospel began to spread (Ephesus), Satan immediately began to crush it violently through men like Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and Hadrian. That brought in the Smyrnan Age of persecution...and yet they were told to endure. Satan's lavish use of violence only caused the church to spread more rapidly. He then changed his tactics, and instead of using brute force, he began to corrupt the church through pagan ritualism and false doctrine.

Pergamos, Thyatira, and Sardis all had issues with their doctrine. Philadelphia alone remained faithful in their love of Christ and His Prophetic Word.

For Satan, if you can't win by divide and conquer, you must unite and corrupt. That is what this Philadelphian Church is commended for...for not taking their eyes off of Christ. It is to them, and them alone that the Promise is made, that they be kept from mankind's darkest hour.

"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." (**Revelation 3:10**)

Astro

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, August 14, 2012

Pete Garcia

Hmmm...where to start? I'd pretty much written this article in my head before I ever sat down to put pen to paper, but as I sit here, the words don't seem to do my thoughts any justice. The last few weeks have been pretty rough for my family and me. Aside from a relentless work schedule, and two rambunctious children, our schedule always tends to fill up quickly.



Then out of the blue, one of our family members suffered a pretty severe injury. Two weeks ago, Astro (our black and tan Dachshund) somehow reinjured his back again while out in our backyard. My wife and I were heartbroken.

About a year and a half ago, Astro ruptured a disc in his spine (a common injury for Dachshunds) from jumping off our bed multiple times. His hind quarters were paralyzed completely, and he had to be carried. Before we even went to a Vet's office, we began praying for him and I even lifted Astro up in the Prayer & Praise Forum on the Omega Letter (as some of you may remember). Spinal surgery then was around 4,500\$, which was hard on us as we knew we couldn't afford that. But we found a veterinarian who offered an alternative treatment to surgery, which was a combination of steroids and 'cold-laser' therapy for considerably less. We decided to give that a shot, and after one treatment, we immediately began to see some signs of improvement in his hind quarters again. Little by little, Astro was back up and walking again (although with a bit of a swagger now).

So the experience from then was not lost on us this time. We knew it had the potential to be a lot worse, which it was, being that his spine now has been ruptured twice. Not only was he paralyzed in his hind quarters, but now he had no control over his bowel movements. Being in a house with 3 females, he was the only other male around. He was the 'little man' of the house, and our relationship had been somewhat rocky over the last five years as we would jockey for that 'alpha-male' role from time to time.

Now he was weak and shaky all the time, whimpering more often as the pain increased. The choice came down to, do we do the humane thing and put him out of his pain, or do we keep hoping against hope that he will show some improvement. Ultimately, the decision was whether we should put him to sleep, because even after the steroid shots and cage rest, his condition seemed to worsen. We knew that even if he did get better, (knowing what a hard charging 'alpha male' he was), he could reinjure it at any moment and we could be right back to the same situation.

I think we both knew what had to be done, before we ever even said it. The night before, my wife and I got to talking about whether we'd see him again once we got to heaven. I know the Bible is somewhat silent on this subject, but I reassured her that at the least, there will be animals in the Millennial Kingdom (Isaiah 65:24-25). And if there are animals then, I do not see why our beloved pets from this life will not join us there during the Millennial Reign of Christ. If Christ's death, burial, and resurrection has proven anything, it's that resurrection is not a 'bridge too far' for God.

Our God is not bound by time and space like we are. He is a Creator God, and ALL things exist through and by Him. God knows the numbers of hairs on your head, knows when a Sparrow falls, and knows each of the untold billions of stars individually by name. God knew us before the world ever was, so most certainly He would know the animals that would come to be in our lives, and the blessings they would endow upon us. Considering that many of these beloved animals not only become part of our families, they serve a multitude of roles such as friend and protector that no other human could possibly fulfill. To say that once they die, that they blink out of existence...does not seem to be in keeping with God's overall creative and righteous character.

I believe that God is sovereign, and in His foreknowledge of the events of this world, He foresaw the relationships that His people would develop with their pets. God is a God of perfect Justice, and in that Justice, animals were created with the inability to sin, or be held eternally accountable for sin. Certain animals were created specifically for the companionship with mankind, even after the fear of animals was put upon them by God back at the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:1-2). Surely, God foresaw the need man would have in domesticated animals, and to a greater extent, non-human companionship. For instance, if dogs and cats were not ever meant to fill that role, why not make them have the same instinctive natures that sharks, spiders, and scorpions have? None of those have ever been domesticated, nor could they be...because it's not in their nature to do so.

We know that heaven will be beyond anything we can possibly imagine (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). Jesus explained a principle of the goodness of God here in the Gospel of Luke I'll share here:

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will

he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”

Astro belonged to my wife and was her best friend long before I came around. He stood by her in her lowest lows, as well as her best of times ...always in unwavering love and devotion to her. To our children, Astro instinctively protected them from the other dogs and from anyone else for that matter that did not meet his approval. To me, he was part rival and part friend. But not only am I a better human being for having known Astro, I'm a better Christian. He not only barked his bark, but he walked his walk. And even though he was only a foot tall...that never stopped him from thinking he was ten feet tall and bullet proof.

As my wife made the fateful decision to bring him to the Vet's clinic on Monday, I met her and stayed with him in his final moments while she said her goodbyes and left with our girls. It was too much for her to stay and almost too much for me...but I didn't want him to be with strangers when he passed. As he lay there on the vet's table, shaking and panting, tears began to well up in my eyes. I was overcome by the feelings of guilt and betrayal as we prepared to end his life there. I knew it was the right thing to do, but sometimes that doesn't make it any easier. I apologized for all the mean things I'd done and said to him over the years, and all the times I pushed him away instead of pulling him closer. He just looked up to me and locked eyes with mine as if saying...it's ok. I think he knew what was about to happen.

I know animals weren't created in the image of God, nor do they have an eternal spirit like we do. They're also not subject to divine judgment for the good and the bad in this life, because they know neither on any kind of intellectual level. They know instinct, and through that they decipher what to fear, what to love, what to be playful with, and when to comfort. I do believe that all good dogs (and pets for that matter) are rewarded their reunion with their masters in the hereafter for their faithful and dedicated service in this life. And IF this is the case, then I know my wife and I will see our beloved friend Astro again.

The Serpent and the Rainbow

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, August 21, 2012

Pete Garcia

I understand that progressive revelation is the idea that God has slowly unveiled things His nature and our future to mankind over the last 6,000 years, but I kept coming back to the question of how and why God uses it. Although I don't fully understand it, I can appreciate it more the more I do study on it. And although Satan is not omniscient, he is an expert on humankind, and he uses his knowledge to pervert, corrupt, and destroy.

Between the serpent in Genesis 3, and the rainbow in Genesis 9, I wasn't entirely sure how the two concepts tied together, until I had the chance to listen to an audio teaching by Douglas Hamp this weekend. But before I begin, let me lead off with a quote by the late Dr. D.L. Cooper who famously once said;

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning.

Unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise.

The Serpent

"Now the *serpent* was more subtle than any *beast* of the field which the Lord God had made..."
Genesis 3:1 NKJV

Now having a literal understanding of the Bible should be done in a manner that first applies common sense. I don't literally think that 'trees can clap their hands'...mainly because trees don't have hands. Nor do I think that God only owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Both of these are examples of hyperbole and demonstrate a deeper truth that underlies the writers' emphasis on what's being said.

EW Bullinger did a study on Genesis 3 and had some fascinating insights to what may have actually transpired. Two of the key words here have been translated into English, which does not do any justice to their original meanings: (i.e....lost in translation)

The Hebrew word rendered "serpent" in Genesis 3:1 is *Nachash* (from the root *Nachash*, to shine, and means a shining one. Hence, in Chaldee it means *brass* or *copper*, because of its shining. Hence also, the word *Nehushtan*, a piece of brass, in 2 Kings 18:4.

Secondly, to the word 'beast' from Genesis 3:1

The word "beast" also, in Genesis 3:1, *chay*, denotes a *living being*, and it is as wrong to translate *zoa* "beasts" in Revelation 4, as it is to translate *chay* "beast" in Genesis 3. Both mean *living creature*. Satan is thus spoken of as being "more wise than any other *living creature* which Jehovah Elohim had made". Even if the word "beast" be retained, it does not say that either a serpent or Satan *was* a "beast", but only that he was "more wise" than any other living being.

In Genesis 3, I just always took the text at face value and figured that Satan had somehow possessed a serpent and used it as the vehicle by which he approached Eve. But touching on something that Doug Hamp spoke on, God had walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden in the cool of the day. If that were the case, they would have in their sinless state, seen God on a daily basis. And if they'd seen God in their sinless state, then the veil between our world and the spiritual world, also likely not yet have been in place. When they were cast out of the Garden of Eden, that veil also was sealed preventing man from physically seeing the spiritual realm just as the Cherubim's closed off the Garden with flaming swords.

The Shining Serpent

Lucifer, as the prototype, was the wisest, strongest, and most beautiful of all the angelic creations. In his vanity, I doubt he would have approached Eve as a lesser being, much less as a snake, but would have come in all his splendor and glory. It is possible that the angelic ranks are assigned each an animal domain (such as is missing from the four-faced Cherubim), and Lucifer's was that of the Reptilian class.

Having succumbed to anger and jealousy at the thought of having to serve a lesser being such as a man, he was able to rally a third of the angels behind him at the 'unfairness' of it all. But this

was part of the test for the angelic ranks, in that they would have to serve even though they were greater in power and wisdom.

Remember what Christ said...

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark 10:45

God Himself demonstrated His servanthood in the life of Jesus by; washing His disciple's feet, healing the sick, raising the dead, teaching and feeding the poor. If He faithful to do it, even to the point of death...it shows how truly prideful and wicked Satan was and those that fell with him in their refusal to serve man.

"...And he said unto the woman, Yea hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"
Genesis 3:1

Rather, Lucifer went to Eve and concealed his murderous plan all the while eloquently wrapping it in the form of a question. He withheld vital information that would have greatly impacted her decision, had she known what would have been the repercussions for her and Adam's actions. And thus...we have been dealing with their fall ever since.

The Rainbow

"And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." Genesis 9:11-13

Six chapters later, Moses records another covenant between God and man. In the first covenant, God told Adam to multiply and be fruitful, and to take dominion of the earth. Now, God is resetting the rules as to how man is to conduct himself here. But it is not only interesting in what God says, but also in what He doesn't say. We know later on that God would speak through the Apostle Peter and say...

"Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:6-7

That phrase 'by the same word' is a reference back to the Noahic Covenant found back in Genesis 9. What God does not tell Noah is, is that the world will one day be destroyed by fire. So why not reveal that then?

The "So What"

After reading something, I always want to get to the 'so what' about whatever it is I'm reading. Progressive revelation is found throughout scripture and God only ever told them (and by extension...us) just enough to keep us heading in the right direction. I think the reason He didn't tell Noah everything, was because man would therefore not have found any motivation in multiplying and being fruitful only to watch it all go up in flames.

Would the Israelites have been motivated to continue on if God had revealed that just seven years short of the Kingdom being established; they would crucify their Messiah, be scattered to the four corners, only to be brought to the point of annihilation by the Nazi Holocaust, only to come back as a nation who then faces war after war until it culminates in the last and hardest seven years the world had ever seen? Not a very cheery proposition, is it?

Or maybe it is like the rest of the Old Testament prophecies, some of which cover thousands of years in a verse, and don't seem to be given in any particular order, but takes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to decipher how they fit together so to keep our enemy and adversary, Satan, confounded as to what God's true intentions are...

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Corinthians 2:7-8

It is why Satan offered Jesus all the Kingdoms if only He would but bow down and worship him. It is why even though it was on the tip of their brains, the disciples (later apostles) couldn't grasp what Christ really came to do. There is also the Rapture (or the return of Christ for His Bride). That information was so heavy and so powerful that even Jesus did not allow Himself to know that of exactly when that day or hour would be. But He knew the season, and the things leading up to that point, and was able to articulate that to his disciples on various occasions. It is also why I think that the date for the Rapture of the Church has been hidden from us, because our adversary would mercilessly seek after that information.

Even Paul, who was the first to understand the mystery of the Rapture, was only able to explain it as, what it was and when it happens in relation to the Tribulation. Even after Paul was shown the third heaven, he wasn't permitted to speak of what he saw, but John was in 95AD.

In writing his epistles, Paul wrote seven letters to seven churches as well (if you take out the duplicates and pastoral letters). But what wasn't revealed to him, was when Christ would return, which is why those Apostles held to the doctrine of Imminency. John later reveals this in the unfolding of the churches in Revelation 2-3.

By the time John is given the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ (Book of Revelation), he is an old man and the Gospel had already been planted in the four cardinal directions. It was too late for the enemy to do anything about it once the Age of the Church began and the Holy Spirit was sent to empower men to preach the gospel.

Conclusion

Satan has been around for a long time and is an expert in the 'human condition'. He knows our natures and our faults. His motivation is in our destruction as we are of no more importance to him, as roaches are to us. He knows how to get to us and uses either hidden or revealed knowledge as a weapon against us. God uses it to protect us from ourselves and from Satan.

And therein lies the rub as they say, in that God does not willingly withhold information from us because He's mean and spiteful, but in that He loves us and knows what's better for us than we know for ourselves. It's His way of protecting us, because if He granted our individual request of knowing what lies ahead, it may very well be our downfall. But we are recipients of the greatest

revealed truth of all, and that is that God through Jesus Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit, indwells and seals us, until the day He comes to take us to be where He is forever.

"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what the riches of the glory of this mystery is among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:" Colossians 1:26-27

Saint Lucifer

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, August 28, 2012

Pete Garcia

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 1:3

Watching the opening ceremonies to the 2012 London Olympics, it was alarming (but not surprising) to see the amount of pagan saturation that could be poured into one event. Granted, the Olympics themselves hail originally from pagan antiquity, beginning in the 8th century BC in Greece. The games then were marked with celebratory pig sacrifices and prayers to their god Zeus. The Olympic torch, which went forth before the games, was carried by the Vestal Virgins (of Roman antiquity), who cultivated the fire that they supposedly received from the Titan Prometheus, who stole it from Zeus to give mankind a chance at attaining godhood.

But out of all the truly disturbing and strange scenes in the opening ceremonies (giant baby anyone?) there was a tribute to the Beatles hit album, the 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart Club' with a full-on parade marching through the coliseum. If you were to Google a picture of the Beatles' album cover to the same name, aside from all the symbolic eastern mysticism scattered about, you'd see in the top left-hand corner...one Aleister Crowley, once labeled the "wickedest man alive".

Biblical Perspective

"And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Mark 13:5-6

LA Marzulli recently pointed out in his blog something that I think gets missed by a lot of people. In this verse by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus stated that many would come either in the stead of or claiming to be Him in the last days. LA points out the prophetic importance of this particular verse, in that **when** Christ said it, He only had a handful of followers. Yet we can see that MANY have come over the centuries either claiming to be Christ or claiming the same power and enlightenment that Jesus had. This certainly explains why no one is claiming to be Mohammed.

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away

disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Acts 20:29-31

The following examples are of demonically inspired apostates, who had and are still having a devastatingly corrupting influence on our culture to this day. They began drawing disciples after themselves by presenting truth mixed with lies. What's interesting to see is how far they fell from what they believed at the beginning, to what they believed at the end of their lives.

Historical

Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), was the lead founder for Theosophy (which is a variation of Theravada Buddhism). Her philosophical impact is still felt in at least 50 nations around the world and promotes the lie that when a person uncovers the truth that lies within them, salvation is attained and promulgated into the next life, which is the highest state one can hope to attain in Nirvana. She was the lynchpin that influenced Alice Bailey (later Oprah) who would go on to corrupt many millions of people.

Alice Bailey, (1880-1949), after divorcing her husband for abuse (an Episcopalian priest), she discovered Madame Blavatsky's teachings on Theosophy and subsequently descended into its demonic studies with the help of her Tibetan ascended master, Djwhal Khul. Her 'guide' assisted her in founding the 'Lucis Trust', teachings on 'Maitreya', eugenics, and so much more...all of which encompasses the depth and width of the New Age teachings today. Her influence has been felt by millions and was even incorporated into the founding of the United Nations.

Aleister Crowley (1875 to 1947) was an outspoken libertine occultist and self-proclaimed 'Antichrist'. He developed several forms of occultism, largely based off of Egyptian paganism such as 'Thelema' and the 'Golden Dawn'. It seems that his mixture of Near and Far East occultism, drug use, and sexual perversity were something that should be praised by the Beatles, who then influenced a generation, and ultimately the artistic orchestrators of the London Olympics. I guess when Satan has a viewing television audience of 1 billion; you go for the gold and pour on the paganism.

Aside from the fact that the listed apostates above were all raised in Christian homes, they all moved west from Great Britain (at the zenith of its empirical power at the time) to the up and coming United States. It's as if Prometheus's 'torch of illumination' was carried west to influence and corrupt the next up and coming empire, much as it had when declining Grecian paganism moved west to rising Roman power. They also all lived during the same time as Israel was in the process of becoming a nation again. Zionism began in earnest in the 1890s and found political fruition with the Balfour Declaration in 1917, before becoming a nation again in 1948. Coincidence?

In our more recent past, we have some uniquely American false prophets and their tragic results: Jim Jones (900+ suicides), David Koresh (76 murder-suicides), and Marshall Applewhite (39 suicides) to name just a few. These men were all brought up in Christian homes, and at some point, departed from the truth and began mixing scripture with their own doctrines of demons...which **always** ends up with tragic results.

But this isn't a new thing, for men and women began introducing heresies and damning heresies into the Christian belief system from as far back as the 1st century. I separate the two,

because a heresy in and of itself may not be a damning (salvation) issue, but if left to fester unchallenged... always tend to grow like a virus and lead into some new variation of a damning heresy ultimately denying some salvational aspect of the Christian faith. They always end up revolving around the same lie that Satan promised Eve in the beginning that she too could become like God.

Saint Lucifer

Aside from having the misfortune of being named Lucifer, there was a man named Lucifer Calaritanus, who was in 362 AD the Bishop of Cagliari. There isn't that much information about him, but apparently, he was vehemently opposed to Arianism...which is a good thing. (Arianism denied the Triune nature of God and proposed that God the Father created God the Son). In John Henry Blunt's book 'Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties, and Schools of Thought' (page 262), it lists the 'Luciferians' (not to be mistaken for the modern day Satan worshippers) as:

"A schismatical party, followers of Lucifer, Bishop of Caralis (Cagliari) in Sardinia, who in the year 362 separated from the Church, on the ground that Arian bishops and clergy, on their return to the Church, ought to be admitted only to lay communion, and that the Church which receives them into the clergy is contaminated, and her communion to be avoided."

It appears that his condemnation as a heretic was not from God, but rather from the pre-Roman Catholic Church hierarchy, who in a spirit of apostate ecumenicalism, welcomed back the Arian priests. This was during the Pergamos Age of the Church, when instead of the Church going out into the world; the world came into the Church. (Pergamos in Greek means 'mixed-marriage'). It appears that his sin (according to the RCC) was in his zealousness in fighting this heresy; as he was accused of not mincing words about those who promoted Arianism.

We are to contend for the faith, not because we like to argue, but because false doctrines have real and often tragic consequences as shown in the examples above. These consequences not only result in tragedy in this life, but apart from the redemptive salvation by Jesus Christ, always results in eternal damnation in hell. Were we to be like the good Bishop Lucifer, and defend and contend vigorously for the faith, the church scene might have a vastly different look these days. Satan's number one agenda is and always will be, to keep the unsaved...unsaved, and to keep the saved from being effective.

There was another man in the Scriptures besides the Apostle Paul who wasn't afraid to mince words, and that was the half-brother of Jesus Christ, Jude...which brings me back full circle to how I even began to think about this topic. Hey Jude, what say you?

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.... But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves."

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up

by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Jude 1:4, 10-13

Manifest Destiny

Prophecy - Signs

Tuesday, September 18, 2012

Pete Garcia

Four score and nineteen years ago our great-grandparents, elected president a man who would set this nation's course on an unavoidable path toward fiscal and political ruin. We as a nation are still reeling from the actions of Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) who in his two terms of office irrevocably transformed this nation.

He not only gave us a European styled central banking system (Federal Reserve), but he campaigned for his second presidential term on the premise that he had kept our boys out of the European war. After he was re-elected in 1916, he promptly put our troops into the war from 1917-1918 (at a tiny cost of 116,000+ US military lives) just so we could have a seat at the global bargaining table after the war ended. The net result being the creation of the impotent League of Nations that subsequently helped set the stage for a Second World War.

Fast-forward thru fourteen boom and bust years, and we come to a man our grandparents elected as president. He ran on a democratic platform of federally fund handouts called the "New Deal". Franklin D. Roosevelt's socialistic ideations of spreading the wealth would create an entitlement society so large that today; Social Security is the world's single largest government expenditure. It has also sucked the life out any hope of financial recovery.

The old phrase used to be 'the sun never set on the British Empire', but by the end of World War II, the sun did set for them, and it left the United States as the last man standing. Europe was in shambles, and it was at that pivotal moment in history, where the United States (with a Christian President) recognized the fledgling nation of Israel. Europe wouldn't oppose it, because of their Holocaust guilt. The Arabs were not yet powerful enough to sway America's opinion with oil and terrorism. FDR had at an earlier time, conceded to the Arabs about the issue, and would have opposed it, but he died of a sudden stroke in 1945 leaving the reigns to Harry Truman.

To summarize: we have an expensive and devastating addiction to tax payer-funded entitlements, one half of the population who pay taxes...subsidizing the other half who do not, a war weary military, leaders who want to lead from behind, and an apathetic public who cares more about being entertained and comfortable...rather than fixing our state of our nation.

It's not a popular message, but we are now watching the sun set on us.

Pax Americana

At the turn of the 20th Century when the British Empire (Pax Britannica) ruled the then known world, the United States was still an up and coming nation playing second fiddle to her royal majesty the Queen. We were still a relatively young nation compared to the old and dying European dynasties. We were comfortable with a small army, small navy, and a fledgling air

force because we felt that we could live and let live. Political and economic isolationism was a popular stance back then, considering our geographical location of being sandwiched between two giant oceans.

Both Wilson and Roosevelt were ideological progressives, and both fundamentally weakened this nation because they believed that bigger government was the solution for what ailed the people. The problem with that kind of thinking is that they truly believed that more government regulation could curb the human appetite. This is akin to thinking that a chain-link fence will make a dog not want to get out and chase small furry animals. To the dog, a fence is merely an obstacle, and where there is a will, there is a way...as many dog owners will attest too. And as a society continues its downward spiral into moral morass, increasingly more regulations are required to keep a society in check.

American Christendom in the 1940's and 50's was dominated by Protestant denominations that were becoming increasingly more liberal. European relativism and socialism had crept into the pulpits over the previous 50 years and a grammatical, literal, historical understanding of the Bible was taking a back seat to unbridled Capitalism and Americanism. So on the one hand; we had seminaries pumping out young liberalized pastors who were complicit in making the church more and more irrelevant. On the other hand, we had a post-war boom in the economy that placed its faith in the 'almighty dollar'. A chasm was building between the haves and the have-nots, which would be exploited in the riotous 1960s and 70s. Admittedly, I'm painting with a broad brush here, but I'm speaking in general terms of the society at large then.

As society's moral compass began to break down, legislative regulation had to be constructed to protect or deny the growing pockets of 'aberrant' behavior groups until they became majorities in the urban areas they lived in. What was considered deviant behavior in one decade became the norm in the next. This has been going on now for several decades and we are now the most regulated people on the planet. And so we have been a nation at war...a 50 year cultural civil-war who is simultaneously trying to lead the rest of the nations on this planet.

Since World War II, we assumed the role of temporary custodial managers of this planet in terms of relegating the global terms of peace and security. If certain nations got out of line, we could either send in the troops or we could manipulate the diplomatic and economic channels to ensure those nations felt our financial and political wrath. But when we as a nation turned our back on God, we traded that moral compass for political correctness and lunacy ensued. And when we did that, we ended up betraying our own self-interest, in favor of ones that conflict with our own national well-being. And because we have so many conflicting interests, our economic and diplomatic sanctions went from being a powerful Billy club...to a whiffle-ball bat.

Presidential candidate Mitt Romney is a Mormon who has very close, personal ties with Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu. And seeing as there has been a recent push within and without the Evangelical world to accept Mormons as Christians, when they are clearly not, it would seem that they have a different perspective of just who the 'true Jews' really are and ultimately what his intentions will be with Israel. **Hey, don't they believe they'll become a god one day?* And unless he would be willing to risk his own political future by introducing some severe austerity measures to protect our nation from an economic collapse, he too will be as unsuccessful as the last two presidents.

The American people will not stand for austerity measures such as gutting welfare, social security, Medicaid, and Medicare. Vice Presidential candidate Paul Ryan's fiscal plan was ripped to shreds as cruel and heartless, and it doesn't even fix anything until 2040! Personally, I

think Romney's win will be a knee-jerk reaction by a frightened public, just as Obama's win was a knee-jerk reaction from a disillusioned public. We are still moving *forward* on this progressive path towards constitutional insolvency, but we change leaders every few years for the purpose of pretense.

Tying it Up

"Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you."

James 5:1-6 NKJV

God used our national destiny to become the world's first super-power as a vehicle to spread the Gospel and be a temporary guardian for protecting Israel as she reentered the table of nations after a 2,000-year Diaspora. We were blessed because we blessed Israel. Before Israel became a nation, we were a safe haven for the Jews. After she became a nation, we became stalwart allies of hers' and threatened to whup anyone who messed with her. Think about it this way...the world's most powerful nation EVER *was* a Christian nation (Emphasis on the word 'was').

Ultimately, our nation (like the rest of the world) will one day come against Israel. But even today, we see this prophecy finding fulfillment. It will be incremental, antagonistic baby steps away from our ally Israel, by ungodly leaders, elected by an increasingly ungodly population. This doesn't happen overnight, but by decades of conditioning by the god of this age. By the time the nations come against Israel, the last bit of restraint this world has (the Church) will be gone and the world will have fallen under the sway of a one world system bent on the destruction of Israel.

A new global financial system will be necessary to calm the world's jittery economic nerves. Once we step away from our Constitutional protections, the slippery slope toward political ecumenicalism will erode our national history and identity to the point of irrelevancy, just as spiritual ecumenicalism does to religions. But *do not hurt the oil or the wine* will be the cry of the people, because being comfortable is more important than some outdated Constitution...not knowing they are fulfilling the prophetic scriptures of the very Bible they hate so much. Our real problem isn't one of financial insolvency, but spiritual bankruptcy.

But fear not believer, because the Bible has already told us these days would come, and ours is not a destiny of fear, but of hope. Our Lord's instruction was to '*look up*' when these begin to happen...

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." James 5:7-8

The Echoes of War

War News

Tuesday, September 25, 2012

Pete Garcia

The geo-political landscape is continually in a state of flux, and it is exactly at moments like this, where I start looking at the things that the media chooses not to focus on because they are too scared too.

"History teaches that war begins when governments believe the price of aggression is cheap." -
Ronald Reagan

With the Middle East cauldron boiling over in every direction, it's hard not to imagine any significant scenario happening that doesn't link back to the tiny nation of Israel in some form or fashion. With hostile neighbors on every side, it seems that the slightest provocation will set off the powder keg of violence against Israel that is pent up and seeking release. We don't know when it will happen, but we can sense it building and brewing, like the rumbling of a volcano under our feet. In some of my previous SMPs, I've stated similar scenarios with these listed below, but they remain the areas to watch as they continue to conform to the Prophetic scenario that is laid out within the pages of the Bible.

UFM: Union for the Mediterranean is to my knowledge, one of the few multi-nation organizations (outside the UN) that Israel is a full-member too. Ironically, with 99% of the southern half of the membership openly hostile to Israel, it seems weird that these nations would still be party to something that included their sworn enemy. But the Arab Spring has shaken up the old peace treaties and leadership there and replaced them with those seeking open conflict with Israel. I believe that despite all the violence and chaos we currently see on TV every night, we are actually in the calm before the storm. In a post-**Psalms 83/Isaiah 17/Obadiah** world, much of the spit and vinegar that is in the blood of the Arabs will have been spent, and it is in that exact moment that the EU through the UFM will seek to incorporate those deflated and defeated nations into some economic and political conglomerate that eerily resembles Rome's former glory days.

Greece: The economic woes are not over for this tiny coastal nation. I won't rehash what thousands of news articles already have, but there is still lingering this idea that there is money to be made from Israel and Cyprus's massive natural gas discoveries. Although a couple of years old, this article ties Russia's intent, with Israel's treasure.

"Moscow is seeking to exploit the deepening strategic ties between Israel and Greece to jump aboard their plans to build an underwater gas pipeline linking Greece to the Israeli Mediterranean port of Ashkelon. This would link up with the existing Ashkelon oil and gas pipeline to Eilat, Israel's Red Sea port.

Russian energy strategists are eyeing the planned and existing segments of this route with great interest, having calculated that the quickest and cheapest outlet for marketing Russian gas to the Far East is through Eilat." (*Source: Times of Israel*)

As I've said before, when you're down in the dumps, you'll take whatever friend you can get. Which is why Israel and Greece (who previously had very little to do with each other) have turned to each other for economic and military alliances. It is apparent to me, that as Greece is

in deep economic trouble, this pipeline idea seems like the natural way to provide both Europe and Israel with a win-win situation. Cyprus and Greece seem the natural conduits in which the natural gas would be transferred through. The sore losers will end up being Turkey and Russia who will get cut out of the deal. Of course, with the amount of Euro's the Greeks have been borrowing, this may be forced upon them as a means to settle the difference.

China: As the older and more prudent generation turns the reins of power over to the younger and more ambitious generation (both in the military and politburo), provocations like what we are currently witnessing will only increase. And like the pre-WWII Japan or Germany, so too are these ambitious leaders seeking to enlarge their borders for natural resources, precious metals, and securing oil supplies to carry them on into the future. The

'Mexican Standoff' I mentioned in an earlier SMP has expanded from China-Vietnam-Philippines, to now include Japan over the Senkaku Islands. They have threatened everything from military action (war) to economic sabotage (bond attacks) to force Japan's hand over the purchase of what the Japanese claim is rightfully theirs.

Both sides appear unwilling to back down from this issue, and you can bet that Chinese Communist party members are stoking the ethnic flames in Chinese cities to get the public behind what we would consider a trivial issue. In fact, because it seems trivial, I wonder if there is not some real reason that China is going to the lengths it has gone too. The US is stuck in the middle as the sworn protectorate of Japan since the end of WWII, and we are desperately seeking to appeal to cooler heads with our Chinese debtor overlords to find some other means to end this. I expect we pressure Japan to give back the Islands to keep the Chinese behemoth at bay. What will ultimately end up happening though, because of our fence-riding double-speak, both Japan and China will decide to wash their hands of us.

EU: Understanding what the Bible says about this newly revived Roman Empire, one only need look at a map to see how both the UFM and the EU fit this model almost to a 'T'. What started out as an economic alliance of Coal and Steel now has put 27 European nations together as a union that not only share economic goals (and pains), political privileges, but now want to create their own Army to provide a unified defense force.

"For Europe to be a truly strong actor and global leader it needs a strong institutional set-up," said Mr. Westerwelle and Mr. Sikorski. "It needs a directly elected president who personally appoints the members of his 'European government'.

As well as calling for a single, elected head of state for Europe, the bloc demanded a new defence policy, under the control of a pan-EU foreign ministry commanded by Baroness Ashton, which "could eventually involve a European army". (Source)

In this map, members of the EU are in blue, member of NATO but not EU are Orange, and in purple are both. Standing up an Army in the EU would not take decades as many people suspect but can be done by simply renaming NATO into something else.

At the moment, both Britain and the US oppose the idea of a stronger, more centralized European Super-state with its own military. They feel that to do so would not only destroy national sovereignty within Europe but would destroy the NATO alliance as well. My thoughts on this are as the US is quickly losing its superpower status through massive debt and political insolvency, we will no longer be in a position to stop Europe from doing what they want to do.

Conclusion: If one were to step back and look at the current issues going on in the world, you would see that the world at large can sense that hard times are coming. It is not just the economic woes that have people around the globe unsettled; it is the feeling that all is not right in the universe and are jockeying for their 'crash-landing' positions. As much as the geopolitical world is rife with tension and hostility, the natural world too is increasingly groaning under the curse that was placed upon it.

My thoughts on this are as the current fiat monetary systems start coming unhinged, nations will seek to divert their people's economic woes to more tangible and affordable ones as a means of diversion. Kings, emperors, presidents, and prime ministers could always use an outside nation or people group to unload their anger and frustration upon, which is why tense standoffs and conflicts will increasingly occur around the globe as nations start to feel the pinch of their economies collapsing. If you can't bribe your people with bread and circuses, you can always redirect their anger at someone else, which usually ends up in armed conflict.

In Revelation 6, we see the four horsemen of the Apocalypse riding across the planet in the last days. The rider on the white horse represents the Anti-Christ bringing in some sort of false peace by means of political conquest. Daniel 9:27 states that this man will re-affirm a covenant with Israel, and that he will have come from somewhere from within the boundaries of the old Roman Empire. The second rider rides the red horse of war. He takes peace from the earth and carries with him a great sword. The third is the rider on the black horse who represents famine and economic collapse. The last rider rides the gray horse and represents pestilence and disease, and death and hell follow him. Many have speculated that we are currently already seeing these riders, but 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 states that we will not even know who the first rider is until after the Rapture takes place.

So if what we are seeing around the world today is troubling, one can hardly imagine what the world will look like after the Rapture of the Church. The world has been suffering the birth-pangs now for decades, and it seems we are just waiting breathlessly for that trigger event which will cause everything to come apart at the seams. Some prudent advice would be to be prepared as you should be, in case of things less ominous occur, such as power outages and storms. But we as Christians are not take this to the point of paranoia and start hoarding gold or moving our families to underground bunkers.

Our God, who is the Creator of the Universe and also indwells us personally through the Holy Spirit, has not only seen the end, but has determined the end. So even as the Four Horsemen approach their appointed place and time in destiny to start their devastating gallop across this planet, what we now hear is only the echoes of their hoof-beats getting louder. We know they can't start their ride until God says so, which won't be until He removes His Bride first. This might be absolutely terrifying for the unbelieving and Christ rejecting world... but should be good news for the Body of Christ...because we know what has to happen first.

"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."

Revelation 3:10

The Cult of Moses

In Defense of the Faith

Tuesday, October 02, 2012

Pete Garcia

"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)

Recently, I had become engaged in a rather heated conversation on Facebook about whether we as Christians we should go back to keeping the Mosaic Law. It seems that there is a growing desire amongst those who support Israel, to want to reconnect back to the roots of our common faith. It is a form of idolatry that turns ones attention from Jesus Christ, back to keeping the Law. I believe that some in these groups have good but misguided intentions in their efforts, but they risk the narrow gate for a system that cannot save nor sanctify.

The Movement

Not as widely known or as structured as the Emergent Church movement (which openly advocates licentiousness and apostasy); the Hebrew Roots is more of a grassroots movement. To me, they are on the opposite end of the spectrum in their zealousness to the Law, as the Emergent groups are to antinomianism. In other words, they are the outer extremes on the same measuring stick. It's as if we have our modern day church age equivalent of the Sadducees and Pharisees.

Although they profess salvation is by grace through faith, by keeping the commandments in the Torah, a Christian demonstrates their love for and faith in Jehovah. But it's hard to lump this movement in altogether, because some go to more extremes than others. For instance, in the Sacred Name group, if you claimed that your salvation is in Jesus Christ, you are not really saved because you are really following a false god since 'Jesus' (Içsous) is a Greek variation of the name Zeus...a false god. At a minimum, they generally agree that the kosher dietary restrictions have to be followed, the Feasts as laid out in Leviticus 23 have to be kept, and the Saturday Sabbath must be observed.

The Problem

Now, this reintroduction of keeping Mosaic laws is not a new argument by any stretch of the imagination. There has been since the beginning of the Church age, an attempt to 'blur the lines' between identifying Christianity with Jewishness. The Apostles and the early church elders dealt with this as it pertained to **circumcision** in the 1st century church:

And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Acts 15:1 NKJV

Seeing as the New Testament was still in the process of being written, Peter, filled with and sealed by the Holy Spirit, asked the question...

Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Acts 15:10

But even Peter and Barnabas had gotten caught up in what Paul called' hypocrisy and Paul rebuked him to his face for being hypocritical about keeping the kosher **dietary restrictions** in certain company.

We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Galatians 2:15-16

The main problem these Hebrew Roots groups and those like them have is that instead of the New Testament superseding the Old, the Old Testament is the foundation by which the New Testament has to be measured by. It is for this same reason that I believe Michael the Archangel contended with Satan over the body of Moses. Had Satan got a hold of the body, he would have enshrined it in some idolatrous manner that would caused the Jews to further stumble and turn their affections more to a lifeless body than to God who gave Moses the Law.

Even the pole with the bronze serpent was worshipped and it was just a stick, imagine what they would have done with Moses or his tomb. For these Hebrew Roots type groups, the Law trumps everything, and they disregard further revelation by Jesus and the Apostles if it conflicts with what the Mosaic Law states. They ignore the fact that the Bible only has One Author, and that it is God the Holy Spirit who moved men to write what they wrote.

Rightly Dividing

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15

Dispensationalists are unique amongst the Christian evangelicals in that we have long held a strong bond and support for the nation of Israel. We understand their role in God's over-arching plan for the Ages as well as our own. We can differentiate between the church and Israel by 'rightly dividing' the Word. It's not merely a matter of opinion, but for one to have a consistent and accurate understanding of the Bible, you have to know what applies to whom. The Hebrew Roots movement is just Replacement theology in reverse.

Instead of replacing Israel with the Church, they have replaced the Church with Israel. One big problem they have is that there is no consistency in how they interpret the Bible. When pressed, they do not agree that we should still be stoning rebellious children or those who are caught in adultery, but with the same breath mandate that the Sabbath and the Feast must be observed. So who gave them the authority to decide which rules to follow and which NOT to follow? Jews under the Mosaic Law didn't get the luxury of picking and choosing which laws to keep, and which to ignore. They had to obey them all. James gives some sober warning to those who would place themselves back under that burdensome yoke. It was *burdensome* because one had to obey ALL of the Law, not just parts and pieces.

The Sacrifice

Israel has three different components to their identity: ethnic, political, and spiritual. As a Dispensationalist, I recognize these three components. I understand that the Law was given to Israel at Mt. Sinai as a nation; to separate them from the pagan peoples in they lived amongst. But the Law, which sitting at 613 separate commandments from God, served another and more

meaningful purpose, which was to point the Israelites as a schoolmaster, to the need for a Savior. There was absolutely NO WAY that they could keep those laws, which is why in God's grace a sacrificial system was emplaced to temporarily atone for the sins of the people.

The Law in the Old Testament revolves around the Ten Commandments. Any violation of these commandments had to be rectified by a sacrificial system in order to atone for sins; otherwise, there would be absolutely no hope for the nation. So really, the sacrificial system of bulls, sheep, and goats made it possible for them to meek out an existence under such a cumbersome yoke.

The fact that Christ Himself did away with the need for such a sacrificial system, speaks volumes about the necessity for the rest of the Law, on which everything hinged for their to be a way to make restitution.

How these groups skirt the most fundamental of issues is that they still claim salvation comes by grace through faith. They point to Revelation 12:17 for an example that links both the commandments and faith together. But to do this, one has to do great damage to the identities of who is who in this passage. The caveat in their salvation by 'grace through faith' is that one can only demonstrate 'true' salvation by keeping the Law because in so doing, one is demonstrating their love for God through obedience. This obviously conflicts with many New Testament passages such as Philippians 1:6; Galatians 3:3, Hebrews 10:10-14. Even John the Baptist (whom Jesus called the greatest of the prophets), states that our salvation comes through our belief in Jesus Christ, not in obedience to the Law or through any kind of works.

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. John 3:38

Clearly, the New Testament teaches that keeping the Law does not save a man, nor is he made more righteous or sanctified by keeping the Law. Only through faith in Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, can one be obtain the 'Righteousness of God'.

Israel & the Church

The church is distinct from Israel. The church does not replace or continue Israel and is never referred to as Israel..."In the book of Acts, both Israel and the church exist simultaneously. The term Israel is used twenty times and ekklesia (church) nineteen times, yet the two groups are always kept distinct." (Source)

Dr. Andy Woods has done the yeoman's work on compiling twenty clear distinctions between Israel and the church. For brevity's sake, I'll just list the top five that I see, but you can read all twenty in his hyperlink.

- 1.** Israel gave birth to Christ (Revelation 12:1-5)
 - Christ gave birth to the Church (Matthew 16:18)
- 2.** Israel had a priesthood coming from the tribe of Levi and the line of Aaron.
 - The Church has no priesthood, because it IS the priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6)
- 3.** Israel is a nation with borders and a capital (Psalm 147:20) and is always portrayed as an independent nation among the other nations of earth.
 - The Church is not a nation (Romans 10:19), but is composed of people from ALL

nations (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:11-22, 3:6, 15). The Church is a pilgrim in this world system (1 Peter 2:11)

4. Christ rescues Israel at the end of the Tribulation upon their national conversion (Matthew 23:37-39)

- Christ rescues the Church before the Tribulation at the Rapture (John 14:1-3, Revelation 4:1-2)

5. Israel was direct party to the Biblical covenants (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

- The Church was not party to these covenants since they were not in existence when they were made.

The first person called a Hebrew in the Bible was Abraham. (Gen 14:13). Abraham is the Father of the Jewish nation, and through him, came Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the rest of the 12 Tribes of Israel. Seeing as he was the first person to be identified as a Hebrew, and Abraham's father was a pagan (Josh 24:2), should lead one to believe, that he indeed was the first.

Christians by the very definition could not exist until Christ lived and died (Hebrews 9:17). The moment He died on the cross, the temple veil was torn in two, signifying that the Dispensation of the Law had come to a pause, and that a new one was to begin. Understanding Daniel 9:26, we know that the Law was not completely done away with, but will find its fulfillment in the final seven years of Daniel's 70 Week prophecy, when after the removal of the Church at the Rapture, God turns His attention back to the Jews and the nation of Israel.

Conclusion

Legalism is an extremely dangerous and slippery slope and always leads people to measure other people's righteousness by their own. Don't believe me? Ask the Pharisees who condemned Christ to the cross. Their hearts were hardened and condemned because they held sincere convictions that they were absolutely right in their cause. As Christians, our righteousness doesn't come from our own behavior, but from Christ's. Christ called us to spread the Gospel, not the Law of Moses and the Apostle Paul clearly lays out what the Gospel is, and he also clearly states those that preach 'another' gospel will be accursed.

We do share a common faith because out of the Old Testament came the New. The Old Testament's example after example points to the coming of Jesus Christ in what is known as Typology. The Old Testament is so rich in typology, because it was meant to show us Jesus. On the road to Emmaus, a resurrected Jesus points this out in detail to his disciples who had still not grasped it.

But it's not only about 'rightly dividing' the word, but we also need to let the word divide us, and so doing, let the Holy Spirit guide and direct us, break us and rebuild us, to truly become the people that God has called us to be. Not doers of rules and regulations, but a people who are in this world, but not of this world. Our hearts and minds, fixed on the things above, not on things of this life. The Law was a shadow of the things to come and this world is drawing to a close, so we need to be busy about sharing the Gospel to a lost and dying world, not seeing how righteous *we* think we can make ourselves. That's not our job...that's Gods.

Somewhere In Time

Witnessing Tools

Tuesday, October 09, 2012

Pete Garcia

For much of the last 2,000 years, most of the Bible's prophetic passages remained hidden to believers. The reason they remained hidden was because there was nothing to measure them against. Like a road with no known destination, mile markers and way points, they don't mean much unless you know where you're going.

Prophetic passages concerning the land, the Kingdom, and the Promises had all been directed towards Israel, and since the nation of Israel's demise to the Romans in 70AD and 135AD, those Old Testament promises lost their intended target. They were seemingly up for grabs for several centuries, that is, until they were absorbed by the dominant rising force in Christendom of that time, the Roman Catholic church. With the rise of the Holy Roman Empire, the world would enter into the Dark Ages.

When Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses in 1517 against the Roman Catholic church, he began what is known as the Protestant Reformation. Certainly, there were men of earlier times (like Wycliffe) who had already been protesting, but Luther's was the one that really took off.

The Protestant movement rallied around five main points:

1. Sola scriptura (only scriptures)
2. Sola fide (by faith alone)
3. Sola gratia (by grace alone)
4. Solus Christus (Christ alone)
5. Soli Deo gloria (glory to God alone).

This movement wanted to unfetter the shackles of bureaucracy, legalism, and ritualism that had been weighing down believers for a thousand years. Protestantism was successful in this, but what they did carry forward from the Roman Catholic system, was Augustinian eschatology (Amillennialism). They held on to this, because the prophetic passages contained within Daniel and Revelation remained hidden to them.

It remained hidden because Israel was still not back in her land, and all those prophetic promises couldn't find fulfillment within the Christian church. Therefore, the Church quit watching, and pretty soon, was wrapped up in the doctrines and dogmas of men, which inevitably led to the splitting of the Protestant denominations six ways from Sunday. It wouldn't be until the 1800's before men's eyes would be opened by the Holy Spirit to the prophetic significance of the coming end of the age.

The return to a literal understanding of the Bible, led men to begin interpreting the Bible in having different Dispensations, to accommodate the seemingly contradictory and conflicting passages.

If we were saved by grace through faith, then maintaining the Sabbath was not necessary for salvation (either to get it or to lose it). Baptism was a ritual done for disciples, not a requirement

to get saved. We didn't need to sacrifice animals, circumcise infants, or maintain dietary restrictions for salvation, because those things did not apply to us now in the age of the Church.

For the first time since the Apostles penned the epistles, the complete picture started to come into view. Men like Scofield, Sir Robert Anderson, and Clarence Larkin applied the practice of 'rightly dividing the word' (2 Timothy 2:15) as the key to not only understanding prophecy, but the Bible in its entirety.

Scofield, recognized in 1909, that in order for the prophetic promises to be fulfilled, Israel would have to become a nation again, which at the time, seemed as unlikely as ancient Atlantis rising up from the ocean.

C.I. Scofield was one of the first who saw the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches as not only to those local congregations but also symbolizing seven specific periods of the age of the church. One would have to have hindsight to be able to look back over 1900 years and see the big picture, which no one had until just the right time. It was like a puzzle piece that was missing, and without it, makes the whole picture incomplete and unknowable.

It wasn't until time caught up with the Bible, that the prophecies would begin to make any sense. Even the most brilliant men of ages past (Isaac Newton) were seemingly dumfounded by the shroud of mystery that surrounded eschatological passages within the Bible.

Men like Darby, Scofield and Clarence Larkin recognized a single significant point: the Church was not Israel, and Israel was not the Church. Therefore, the promises given in the Old Testament COULDN'T be applied to the Church. Similarly, the Church had undergone six stages thus far (as represented in the 7 Letters), so it was at this appointed time, that God allowed men's understanding to be enlightened.

So where are we now?

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." Daniel 12:4

I've often wondered about several statements about the end times, and how we, who are seeing these things transpire, should make sense of them all. Jesus says, that no man will know the day or hour (Matt 24:36). Yet, we have the Olivet Discourse, chocked full of signs that point to the end (Matt 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). Jesus also compares the end to the times of Noah and Lot (Luke 17:26-30).

If you are looking at the two points of reference Jesus uses (Noah and Lot's day) these would be as examples of the time just before His return. This would be the nonchalant, laissez-faire attitude of the world as to its place in time. But here we are at a point in time, when the unsaved world is beginning to wonder... "what is going on?"

The weather has been going crazy these last ten years. Earthquakes, tsunamis, comet fly-bys, volcanoes, and hurricanes are pummeling the planet. So how can the world be caught off guard when it's expecting it to end in 2012, even if it is doing so with a nervous sort of laugh? Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5, is reaffirming the Lord's command to be watching, and in so doing, you would recognize the season you were in, even though you won't know exactly when (i.e...day or hour).

Here we are today, and we see so many things lining up: politically, religiously, militarily, and economically that are fitting exactly into what the Bible says the end times will look like. The world doesn't know exactly what is occurring, but it knows something is askew.

Also, in the days of Noah, only eight were saved (out of the possible billions alive), and only Lot and his immediate family were rescued out of thousands in those cities. What does that mean in our day, when millions are still coming to Christ around the world every year? Does the Church have to wait until we reach a time when the lost are no longer responding to the Gospel anymore?

That doesn't seem likely to me. As long as the Holy Spirit is in the business of drawing men and women to Christ, people will still respond. At some appointed time, there will be a Gentile fullness to the Body of Christ (Rom 11:25), when the Father will draw the Holy Spirit back (2 Thess 2:7) . When that day comes, the Holy Spirits' role of restraining evil in this world will come to an end. In Genesis 6, the Lord makes the following statement, which I believe has a veiled (dual application to the future Rapture) by saying:

And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." Genesis 6:3

If God is omnipotent (He is), and He knew that Jesus would come to die on the cross to take a people for Himself (He knew), and that one day, Jesus would come to claim those who were sealed by the Holy Spirit (He will), than what is said here in Genesis 6:3 is as valid in Noah's day as it was in ours.

From Darby and Scofield's day, until ours, we too have had to let time catch up with the Bible. I think about the brilliance of those men who lived in a day and age, which had no signs, yet, could take the Bible literally, and see where the world was heading a hundred years before it ever came.

Today, we are inundated with so many signs that it's desensitized most of the Church. At exactly the point in time when the Church should be the most excited and anticipating our Lord's return, it is asleep at the wheel. Not that this surprised the Lord, because He saw this 2,000 years ago and said...

"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you." Revelation 3:3

Mission Creep

Perspective on the News

Tuesday, October 16, 2012

Pete Garcia

Mission creep: The tendency for a task, especially a military operation, to become unintentionally wider in scope than its initial objectives.

The United States just recently crossed the 12-year mile marker for an active war in Afghanistan. We managed to beat a previously held record (held by ourselves) with the length of fighting edging out the Vietnam War by a month. Both wars comparatively started off in one direction but seemed to lose their direction somewhere along the way. A decade later, people were wondering why we really went there in the first place.

We entered Vietnam unofficially in 1954 (*officially in 1964*) to counter Soviet expansionism in the region. We left 19 years later with 58,282 Service Members either KIA or MIA with no clear-cut victory under our belt. We went into divided Vietnam to help unify a nation, and somehow managed to divide our own during the whole experience.

We went into Afghanistan with righteous indignation after the attacks on 9/11 to deny Al Qaeda a safe haven from which to operate from, but now we are trying to build something that has never existed there. With the recent history of the Arab Spring, we know given the opportunity, an Islamic nation will enthusiastically trade in a secular dictator for a theocratic regime, whose only trick they have to offer up is a rigid and bloody Sharia Law. At this point as far as the Grand Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) goes, I think we are just trying to beef up Hamid Karzai's 'government' just long enough so that we can build a small window of time between our exit and their governmental collapse. At least we can say that we did our best before we washed our hands of the whole event.

Having been there and lost friends in this war, I don't think of the military's mission as having failed or become irrelevant, because you can stick our military anywhere on the planet and we'll find a way to make the mission happen. The problem is the purpose of the mission itself. Somehow, we've lost our way on what our task and purpose is which means that leaving too soon will risk all the gains made and staying any longer seems unpalatable by all. I find it ironical that we are willing to give our sworn enemies (Al Qaeda) a firm red-line (2014) of which we will not cross in staying, but we can't find it within ourselves to give our other sworn enemy (Iran) a firm red-line of what they can't cross in their race to acquire a nuclear weapon.

A terrible boxer will telegraph his punches which always results in him losing the fight. Giving our enemy a clear line in the sand of when we will pull out, is not only not helpful to the ground commanders in the fight, but it signals to those who we are supposed to be training and building up (Afghan forces), that our friendship has an expiration date. If we are to fight, let's fight to win, not fight to come to a draw. We are to take the fight to the enemy, and if our enemy is hiding out in Pakistan as the Vietcong did in Cambodia, then we take the fight to Pakistan. We will no more win a war only using drone attacks than will a boxer win using jabs.

The truth is that a tribal country like Afghanistan is still stuck in the Bronze Age, who if hit by a massive Electro Magnetic Pulse (EMP) wouldn't even feel it. There can be no change there unless you can either change their religion or change 3,000 years of tradition. And whatever

government you install there will never make us happy or the local populace. Politicians in Afghanistan have their tribal allegiances to worry about first, then their religious, and then everyone else. This is why Hamid Karzai won't lose any sleep over his ability to flip alliances at will. Plus, the level of corruption that is sure to accompany any political endeavor there will cement their chance of success without direct intervention at exactly the same odds the Titanic had at a successfully navigating through an iceberg.

Scan Your Lane

When you were young, you had all these dreams and grandiose plans for what you would do and where you would end up, but somewhere along the way, you too lost your way. In military speak; a 25-meter target is that issue that is immediately in your sights you have to deal with. This might be a mission, a health issue or whether you have enough money to pay your mortgage at the beginning of the month. Maybe it is a career or some habit that just seems to suck up all your time. This world is more rigged than a Vegas roulette table, and it is geared at keeping you from focusing on God and God's plan for your life.

Our lives become a fertile breeding ground for *mission creep* and the world with all of its assorted materialistic distractions tend to become so encumbering that you soon find out that you just don't have time for God anymore. One thing always leads to another, and there just aren't enough hours in the day to find a quiet place to put your prayer and devotion time in anymore. The world will find every excuse in the book to keep you from fulfilling what Christ has called you to do.

"Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Ephesians 1:4-5 NKJV

You and I were uniquely created and selected to live in this exact moment in time to do a specific mission that is tailor-made to complement the gifts and talents that are uniquely our own. When Christ was on the earth, His operations were fairly simple. Jesus built no temples or shrines, had no writings, and didn't build a complex works-based religion. He simply said to those 12 men, 'follow me', for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. And that rag-tag group of 12 men dropped everything and followed Him and empowered by the Holy Spirit...they turned the world upside down.

Jesus called each one of us because we make up a particular part of the Body of Christ to fulfill a specific mission that is hand-tailored for us. He is the purpose in our task, and our mission is wherever He puts us. When we grasp that a closed door is not failure, but simply God moving us into a new mission, the anxiety and depression that the world tries to stigmatize us with, suddenly seems irrelevant and petty.

It is His intent to allow those trials and tribulations that are uniquely ours, that in our weakness we can rely on His strength to accomplish His will by revealing our true nature He knew we had in us all along. Remember, even though our nation may enter into unwinnable wars, the battle over you and I was fought and won 2,000 years ago on a cross outside of Jerusalem on a hill called Calvary.

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward *man* is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us

a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which *are* not seen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Out of Many, One

Globalism - Ecumenism

Tuesday, October 23, 2012

Pete Garcia

Currently, out of the desperation in Europe's ongoing financial crises, there is in the works a marrying of the technology that currently exists with the financial restructuring that is seemingly channelizing the EU into becoming a more unified, streamlined, cashless society.

They may not know this at the present, but each crisis seems to move from one country to the next and it always seems a little grimmer than the one before. But the trend is moving them (and us) in the direction in which fiat currencies are becoming cumbersome, unreliable, and irrelevant. Removing local currencies such as the British pound or the Polish z³oty is just a matter of manipulating their values until they either become too expensive to be practical or they are devalued on purpose.

In Europe, many people and even entire countries have already gone almost completely cashless. The key to the success of this new system is that its net worth is not measured against individual markets or in tangible things (oil or gold) that can be rocked by unpredictable events such as war, natural catastrophes, or the whims of market speculation, but rather it will be an artificially based value on the system as a whole. Digital currency can be tracked to the specific; item, time and place a transaction took place. Drugs, illegal immigration, and human trafficking could be wiped out almost overnight. The next logical step would be ensuring that the person conducting the transaction was the actual person to whom the account is linked too. This is where 'the mark' connects the fourth part to the transaction.

I am no financial expert, but from my foxhole, the stock markets are largely predicated on herd mentality. At the first whiff of fiscal peril, panicked investors head for the doors with their money in tow. The world is growing tired of the volatile and unpredictable, and long for stability and predictability, particularly in Europe with the ups and mostly downs of the PIIGS nations. People at some point in the not-too-distant future will gladly trade the prospect for big financial gains, for some peace of mind. If currency becomes entirely digital (as is the case in cashless societies), couldn't artificial values be set to a predetermined worth? This might appear as an oversimplification on my part, but a dollar/euro/pound/etc only has value because that government says it has value.

I think Europe will be the test bed for this sooner rather than later, and after it has shown great success in not only stabilizing their markets and their currency, it will be quickly and successfully adopted around the world as the model to use. The UK might balk at the idea of completely giving up the British pound, but if this new system included them as one of the senior stakeholders, I would bet they might be more open to the idea. Somehow either through crook or nook, they along with the other holdouts will be enticed to join in the EU's new financial system.

The Almighty Dollar

The Global Economic Conditions report and tracks economic conditions around the world and studies the trends in how markets and nations are holding up against each other. Let's say for arguments sake that the US did collapse for whatever reason, the real fear then is that the US Dollar would drag all the other major currencies down with it. It might seem a little far-fetched to think that, but many nations already have growing concerns that it is not a matter of if, but when. They are actively trying to delink themselves as quickly as possible from the dollar. So when thinking about the mark of the beast and a one world financial system taking a long time to become implemented, that is nothing more than wishful thinking. Nothing brings about a quicker and more drastic transformation than does a crisis. The more severe the crisis, the more rapid and more drastic transformation seems not only reasonable, but also preferable to the alternative. And the collapse of the US government along with the US dollar would be the greatest financial disaster the world has ever seen.

The largest hindrance for a global or regional currency to be implemented is not the Bible believing Christian in the world, because let's face it, even within Christendom there is only a relatively small minority that still takes the Bible literally and even fewer still, that take the book of Revelation seriously. What withholds this from serious global implementation at the moment (aside from God's timing) is that the largest free market in the world, the United States, is still bound by its Constitution from using any currency that our Congress does not 100% control and regulate. That authority was relegated over to the Federal Reserve back in 1913, but Congress still has a semblance of control, which appears at the moment, to be good enough for the American people.

Considering all the constitutional violations we have already accepted as the 'new normal', Americans would rather have a symbolic constitution, than have to face the severe austerity measures which would severely hamper the comfortable lifestyle we have grown accustomed too.

Superman

The Antichrist is the Rider on the White Horse who, as the consummate Peacemaker, will have the perfect solution to fix most (if not all) the geo-political problems in the Middle East (ME). He will be able to do what no other politician before him has ever done, and not because of his political prowess (which he will certainly be a master of) but because of the geo-political situations that have yet to transpire. Simply put, no global leader before 1948 could negotiate with the state of Israel, because Israel had not existed as a national entity since 70AD. No global power or leader could negotiate away the status of Jerusalem from the Jews prior to the Six-Day War, because the Jordanians controlled most of the city prior to that war. Humanity and Satan has had to wait for the events in 1948 and the 1967 to catch up with Bible prophecy first. But now that there is a nation of Israel whose capital is Jerusalem once again, the process in which Bible prophecy can be fulfilled has been moving in overdrive. And so it has been from 1967 until today that satanically inspired politicians and political entities of all stripes and flavors, have fruitlessly bargained for trying to divide up the Jewish state by trading land for peace.

"Then *he* shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering..." (Daniel 9:27)

Now it's difficult to say what exactly is negotiated, because we have not reached that moment in time for the conditions to be just right. It could be that the Psalm 83/Isaiah 17/Ezekiel

38 scenarios would have to play out first before we could see this man appear on the scene to simply pick up the pieces. He will just be at the right time and right place for Satan to use. But none of this is really new news to those who watch these things with a prophetic eye. What we have seen now for the past two years is that the Arab Spring has been setting the stage for there to be a war(s) of such significance that they fundamentally transform the face of the Middle East once again.

So how does the European currency crises and Middle East peace tie together?

It would appear that as we hear the ME war-drums beating louder, and see the EU financial crisis stabilizing, that the entrance into this new regional financial system will be entirely dependent upon and at the cost of, a nation's sovereignty...much like it was in the days of the Roman Empire.

Render Unto Caesar...

Conquered countries in the Roman Empire were free to maintain a semblance of autonomy (language, culture, and religion) so long as they paid taxes and tribute to Caesar and didn't stir up too much trouble. They fell under Roman law, so being a citizen was of the utmost importance because it guaranteed you certain rights and privileges that non-citizens did not have. (Think Paul) They (subjugate nations) were allowed to use their own currency at the local level, but had to use Roman currency for anything official like taxes and tributes back to the Caesar. But this was not simply limited too money and politics. Those under the Roman thumb were also allowed to practice their various religions; so long as they still acknowledged Caesar as God. This is what brought the ire of the Romans almost exclusively on the early Church, in that they would not acknowledge Caesar as a God.

In keeping with Roman tradition, people wouldn't have to necessarily give up their faiths overnight. There is a strong strain of Babylonian ecumenicalism that runs deep in the ancient Romans because of the multitude of gods they worshipped. They even had a shrine for the 'unknown god' that Luke makes mention of in Acts 17:23. So starting out, I do not think that it will be as easily recognizable to most people in the world.

Remember, Satan only has seven years in which to accomplish political and militaristic conquest. He does not have enough time to conquer the world by force; it has to be something that links all of mankind together, which is why it has to be financial. He also doesn't have to vanquish all the various religions out there at once either, because only born-again Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and have the ability to discern the truth. And since all born again believers from the Church age will have been removed prior to his arrival, it shouldn't be that difficult. But the Antichrist will have two advantages that no other leader before him had, and that is the right time and right place, and the supernatural ability of signs and wonders, which our modern world today is very unaccustomed to dealing with.

So, we see that out of many currencies, one will rise and take dominance. Out of many governments, one will rise and rule the rest. And out of the many leaders in this revived Roman system, one leader will rise, and will bring upon him and those on the world, the wrath of God that has been foreordained before the beginning of the world.

So, where and when does the Rapture of the Church fit into all this? Consider that we already see all these already in place, or on the verge thereof:

1. The success of this covenant's (Dan 9:27) implementation is predicated upon a perfect-storm recipe: frustration at the current peace process, widespread war, and a global financial calamity that can be used by the Antichrist to bring about a false sense of peace and security. All these things have to not only be present, but at the end of their ropes if you will.
2. The world would have to be in a state of war to make peace worth the covenant. Our world today is a pressure cooker of ratcheting tension waiting to explode. (41 active conflicts today, more than at any one point in history)
3. The revived success of the Roman Empire's (EU/MU) financial system would be used in part to coerce those recently defeated Arab nations to come underneath their umbrella. It will only cost them their sovereignty but considering that the Arab spring has left them in shambles, anyway, shouldn't be too hard a pitch. Israel will be asked to join, but for different pretenses with the prospect of peace and financial stability.
4. The Antichrist's arrival and the start of the 70th week are dependent upon the confirmation of this covenant, not the Church's departure.
5. But the Apostle Paul states that the Antichrist cannot be revealed until the Church has been removed first.
6. If the stage for war is being set, and the perfect financial storm already exists to bring about a dynamic restructuring for Europe, then our departure is not far off.

"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near." (Luke 21:28)

Strange Fire

Prophecy - Signs

Tuesday, November 13, 2012

Pete Garcia

"Discernment is not a matter of simply telling the difference between what is right and wrong; rather, it is the difference between right and almost right; the difference between truth and error is not a chasm, but a razor's edge." (Spurgeon/Murray)

It would seem that the tried-and-true doctrines that have guided the Church over the last two millennia are coming under increasing attacks from without and within Christendom. As it was at the beginning of the church age, so it is here at the end, that heresy and apostasy run rampant as every aberrant doctrine seems to be gaining new ground.

Judaizers

The early Church during Paul's day was largely Jewish, but the Gospel had begun to spread to Greece, Rome, Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), Antioch, and other predominantly Gentile areas. As the Gentiles began to come into the body of Christ in greater numbers, there were those Jewish converts (Judaizer's) who followed Paul around and began trying to introduce the idea that these new Gentile believers had to first become Jewish in order to obtain salvation and sanctification before they could be complete. An old adage from the Apostle Paul would have been equivalent in saying "addition to the work of Christ is the greatest subtraction of all".

"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. Acts 15:1

The apostles present there at the Jerusalem Council, soundly rejected this merging of Christianity with Judaism. Paul, who would later go on to write the bulk of the New Testament, specifically addresses this issue again and again in his epistles to the Galatians and the Romans. This idea of introducing the Law back into Christianity as a necessary step towards either salvation, or sanctification would prove to be the point of departure in which the Jews would begin to decrease in the body of Christ, while the Gentiles would increase therein. Although there were varying degrees of legalism as was imposed in these Judaizing sects as to which laws, feasts, and observances had to be kept, it became the dividing issue that drove a two-thousand-year wedge between the followers of Christ, and the followers of Moses.

Gnostics

If you were to fast-forward through two centuries of church history, you would see the early Church fathers that would help steer the fledgling Christians along the way. Most churches then did not have complete Bibles as the Gospels and Epistles were either still in the process of being written or being distributed. Satan used this gap in coverage by introducing false epistles and gospels, which seemed to very effectively, mix the doctrines together producing confusion and division. Gnosticism had begun to become prevalent in many areas and God raised men up who would take a stand against damning doctrines of heresy and apostasy, which threatened to doom the fledgling church at its conception.

The early Church fathers such as Polycarp, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Ignatius of Antioch, and Tertullian had been combating these heresies through their writings and teachings, which had begun infiltrating the churches as early as the 1st century. But by the 3rd Century, Gnosticism had become so prevalent; that councils had to be held in order to cement Christian doctrine down and to determine what scriptural canon was and what was not.

The Gospel of Barnabas, Thomas, Mary, and others had been floating around as if they were written by the title's namesakes, but in fact had been fraudulently written over 100-200 years later. Each of the early councils seemed to repudiate the latest Gnostic heresy going around, but over time, the Roman Catholic Church became the predominant face of Christianity and the councils themselves became corrupted as they sought to steer biblical doctrines into Catholic/Papal doctrines.

This is where the following heresies would spring forth trying to fundamentally change the nature of Christianity and of Salvation by attacking the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Don't let the names fool you though; many of these heresies have made full comebacks under different names in these last two centuries.

Adoptionism: Belief that Jesus was born as a mere (non-divine) man, was supremely virtuous and that he was adopted later as "Son of God" by the descent of the Spirit on him.

Apollinarism: Belief that Jesus had a human body and lower soul (the seat of the emotions) but a divine mind. Apollinaris further taught that the souls of men were propagated by other souls, as well as their bodies.

Arianism: Denial of the true divinity of Jesus Christ taking various specific forms but agreeing that Jesus Christ was created by the Father and had a beginning, and the title "Son of God" was a courtesy one. The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD effectively condemned this as a heresy.

Docetism: Belief that Jesus' physical body was an illusion, as was his crucifixion; that is, Jesus only seemed to have a physical body and to physically die, but in reality, he was incorporeal, a pure spirit, and hence could not physically die.

Pneumatomachians (Macedonians): While accepting the divinity of Jesus Christ as affirmed at Nicaea in 325, they denied that of the Holy Spirit, which they saw as a creation of the Son, and a servant of the Father and the Son.

Nestorianism: A belief that Jesus Christ had two separate natures, human and divine, in one being.

Sabellianism: Belief that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three characterizations of one God, rather than three distinct "persons" in one God.

The Antichrist Spirit

"And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." 1 John 4:3

When we think of the Antichrist, we often think of evil men like Hitler, Stalin, and Caesar Nero. They were easy to label because they so embody a level of evil that was so antithetical to who Christ was. The truth is that the antichrist is not just against Christ, but when he does come, he will come **in the place of Christ**. Jesus said that in the last days, many would come in His name pretending to be Him.

Today's cults and false religions always present a Jesus in their teachings in some form or fashion. To the Mormon's, he is the spirit brother of Adam and Lucifer. To the Muslims, Jesus (Issa) was a great prophet, but not God. To the Buddhists, Jesus was a man who spent his "lost years" in India learning to become a Buddhist. To the Jehovah Witnesses, Jesus used to be Michael the Archangel. Every cult and false religion **has to change** something about the person of Jesus Christ in order to promulgate the lies they are peddling. They will call Him everything under the sun except for, God come in the flesh. This is the spirit of antichrist.

Almost Right

The Hebrew Roots crowd is seeking to persuade Christians today that by keeping the Law, they are in fact more honoring and pleasing to God. They equivocate obedience to the Mosaic laws, to love for God...thus necessitating the need to reintroduce the Law (various parts of it anyway) back into Christianity. The error in this is that the Law was a shadow of the reality and was meant to point man to his need for Christ, not to go back and attempt to keep the unkeepable.

"For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ

Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation." (Galatians 6:13-15)

Possibly an unintended consequence of going back into the Hebrew Roots movement is the tendency to reject the doctrine of the Trinity. Instead of God the Holy Spirit being separate but co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son, He is now reduced to being nothing more than God's an impersonal breath (or power/force) that God utilizes to do His will.

They do this by claiming that the doctrine of the Trinity is nothing more than a concoction of Emperor Constantine's 'sun-god' worship. The truth is, the Scripture's may not spell out the word Trinity, but that does not mean the Scriptures don't teach it. The Bible doesn't use the word omnipotent, but no one would deny that God does not encompass that quality. Non-canonical writer and early church father Tertullian (155-230 AD) advanced the doctrine of the Trinity long before Constantine and the Nicene Council in 325 AD.

Strange Fire

"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not." Leviticus 10:1

There are also a whole slew of televangelists and mega-church pastors today who preach another gospel. They preach a prosperity gospel, word-faith gospel, seeker friendly gospel, and emergent and ecumenical gospels, which water down, distort, and profiteer off the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Maybe these men and women had good intentions at the outset, but somewhere along the way faulty doctrine corrupted them. Paul warned us about these men and women who would come along and twist Scripture for self-benefit and to gather followers after themselves.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some." (2 Timothy 2:15-18)

It's interesting to me as to what Paul singles out here as what constitutes straying from the truth for Hymenaeus and Philetus, but we'll come back to this.

While it would be impossible to list every fringe offshoot of Christianity, or every false doctrine that has presented itself in the name of Christ, we need not worry. If we but heed the Holy Spirit's advice to study to show ourselves approved, these doctrines of demons would present themselves quite plainly to us and by so doing, strange doctrine (fire) becomes easily recognizable and would not entangle us in its snare of deceptive destruction.

Weathervane

One of the clearest doctrines that you can use as a weathervane of sorts, when looking into a ministry or a teacher is whether they hold to a pre-tribulation rapture. This shouldn't be the only thing you investigate, but right off the bat you can get an idea of where that person or ministry stands on a whole host of issues by just this one doctrine. In order to have that Pre-Tribulation eschatological view you'd have to:

1. You take a literal, historical, grammatical view of Scripture. (2 Tim 3:16-17)
2. You recognize that the Church is not Israel and Israel is not the Church. (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 10:32)
3. That although God has not changed the mechanism for salvation (grace through faith), He has dealt with mankind differently over the ages. (Gen 2:15-17, 9:1-17, 12:1-9; Ex 20:1-17; Matt 27:51, Acts 2:1-4)
4. That God has progressively revealed Himself and His nature to mankind. (Mark 4:11; Rom 11:25, 16:25; 1 Cor 2:7, 15:51-55; Eph 3:1, 5:32; Col 1:26)
5. Christ's return is imminent, unknowable, and not predicated on an event to happen. No man knows the day or hour, but we can recognize the season. (Matthew 16:1-3, 24:36; 1 Thess 5:1-10)

The bottom line is, we sin when we don't do what God asks us to do. But we can also sin when we go beyond what God has asked us to do. God doesn't need us to do His bidding, He gives us work for our benefit, not His. The fine line is staying within the boundaries God establishes for each of us. Maybe this is why God had such severe repercussions for those who would stray outside of His guidance and do things that become abominable.

I think this is dangerously becoming the norm today within what is called Christendom, as many have moved away from the tried-and-true doctrines of Christianity to go after strange fire.

Note: This is Pete's 70th article and his last submission for a while as he prepares for the newest addition to his family, due in February. It's been a great run! Pete's contributions to the Omega Letter these past couple of years have enriched us and challenged us. Thank you Pete. May the Lord continue to guide you in your upcoming ventures.