

The snare of the soul

Exposing “The Pigtail Principle”



Matthew 10:34-39—

You should not be inferring that I came to be casting peace on the earth. I did not come to be casting peace, but a sword. For I came to pit a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And the enemies of a man are those of his household. He who is fond of father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me. And he who is fond of son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me. And he who is not taking his cross and following after Me is not worthy of Me. He who is finding his soul will be destroying it, and he who destroys his soul on My account will be finding it.

I see that the latest peculiar teaching to come out of *Bible Student's Notebook* is that the Tribulation of the end of this eon (see the book of Revelation for details) will not be a world-wide cataclysm, but rather a local disturbance in the environs of Israel. This startling new perspective comes to us from the pen of Jim Burson, whose book, *The Cataclysmic Prophecies of the Jews and Their Divine Purpose* will be shortly available at studyshef.com. A sample of this teaching comes to us via installment #506 of the *Bible Student's Notebook*.

I am personal friends with Jim Burson, and have been for many years. He's a good guy; a very sweet man. Thus, it is hard to write this, but I'm stuck with it.* I confess to not knowing that he held this belief. I was also surprised to learn—during a visit James made to Windber, PA last year—that he also believes that the flood of Noah was local. Are these not parallel teachings?

IT NEVER RAINS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

When I heard that the flood of Noah was local, I nearly jumped out of my seat. Come to think of it, I *did* jump out of my seat—like a kangaroo with his tail on fire. I hopped away to get my Bible. I'd never heard such an odd belief as a local flood of Noah. It could be that I vaguely got wind, decades ago from some obscure Christian source, that such a theory existed, but not in my wildest dreams (and I do have wild dreams) could I imagine how anyone could read the account of Noah and come away with the thought, *That's obviously a regional water issue*. I knew James to be an extremely intelligent man, so I set about to hear the evidence. The most I got out of it was, “The Greek word for ‘earth’ does not always mean the entire planet.”

That may be, and I will deal with this issue when discussing the Tribulation tribulation, but there were other insurmountable problems in the Genesis account that,

* For a personal word concerning my face-to-face meeting with Jim Burson yesterday, please see page 13.



in the course of the conversation, Jim in no way surmounted. For instance, here is a killer verse from Genesis 6:17—

Now behold, I Myself am about to bring a deluge of water on the earth to wreck all flesh under the heavens which has the spirit of life in it. All that is in the earth, it shall de cease.

It is extremely difficult, I think, to read this passage and believe this was a local flood; I would have said, “it is *impossible* to read this and believe it was a local flood,” but apparently, it is *not* impossible. In the realm of Scriptural interpretation, I am finding that few things are impossible; people can believe just about anything. Just when you think you’ve heard it all, something new comes around.

Next, the water covered the tallest mountains. Genesis 7:19—

Exceeding exceedingly, the waters, they gained the mastery over the earth, and all the lofty mountains under the entire heavens were covered. At fifteen cubits upward, the waters had gained the mastery, so that all the lofty mountains were covered.

Does water seek its own level? You bet it does! If the water rose fifteen cubits above the tallest peaks “under the entire heaven,” then nothing on earth was left uncovered. And finally, God told Noah in Genesis 9:11—

Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a deluge, and never again shall there be a deluge to wreck the entire earth.

If by “all flesh” God meant “only some flesh,” and if by “wreck the entire earth” God meant “only portions of the earth,” then He has broken His promise thousands of times over. Interesting that I was listening to this strange teaching only eight miles from Johnstown, PA, site of one of the worst flood in United States history.

So much for that nice little rainbow—if *the flood of Noah was anything but global*.

None of these killer verses *disproving* a local flood impressed Jim. He did not even bat an eye at them. I could not understand why—until now. At least I think maybe I understand why. The willingness to take such pains to explain away the obvious meaning of Scripture requires a hefty pre-disposition. I will venture a guess as to what this predisposition is. The same pre-disposition, I believe, colors Jim's denial of an Earth-shattering Tribulation. Could I be wrong about this pre-disposition? Of course I could. But if I thought I was wrong, I would not be writing this. I am publicly commenting upon a public teaching that I consider to be damaging to faith in God and His Word. My comments upon this teaching will help you to see where I think it is coming from, so that you may be able to avoid it and similar glitches of belief.

MOTIVES

Whenever an anomaly like this surfaces to upend the obvious tenor of any passage, I always ask myself, "Why does this person *want* such a teaching to be true?" Because to manipulate Scripture to the extent that one has to look at it upside down, one has to want something else—badly. One has to "have a motive," as we say. We know that those who hold to the eternal torment doctrine so want God to torture their enemies that they cannot correctly interpret

"To twist Scripture to this extent, someone has to want something else—badly."

obvious Scripture passages teaching the salvation of all. The pre-disposition I will set before you is the opposite of the eternal torment mindset. It is a "bleeding-heart" mindset, an emotional cry for peace, family, and the delicate balance of nature: Kumbaya; let's hold hands for peace, hug a tree; send a child to camp—that sort of thing. It is a method of interpretation based on the soul, rather than the spirit. I believe this method to be at work not only with Jim Burson, but with our friends Clyde Pilkington, Stephen Hill, and Dan Sheridan. It colors many of the oddities that have recently emerged from the pens and lips of these men. I will elaborate shortly.

So absurd is the "local flood" theory that it would be an unnecessary expenditure of pixels to further refute it.

The verses I quoted say enough, never mind that the water came up from the submerged chaos and from the canopy of water above heaven, and from the rain—for forty days (Genesis 7:11-12). Never mind the spiritual implications of a *world* (not a region) that had lost itself in sin. Never mind the spiritual implication of saving eight people—eight being the number of a new beginning and also the number of Christ. A *local* flood? I can just picture God saying to Noah: "Build thee an oxcart of gopher wood, drive out to Interstate 7, head north, take the third exit, and you should be out of the worst of it." Think of all the gopher wood that would have been saved.

"FILM AT 11"

Concerning a localized Tribulation, here are some quotes from Jim Burson in the *Bible Student's Notebook*:

Creating the image in one's mind that the dire events of Hebrew prophecy (the Apostle John was of course a Hebrew person) are to be understood as global in extent is the beginning of many errors, creating very obvious incongruities, if not irreconcilable inconsistencies. One, in particular, stands out as glaring and demanding correction in our thinking, if it has not already occurred. Proposing that the infrastructure of all human societies and the order of nature's vitality is crippled during the "tribulation period," what then is left over for Christ to reign?

In my opinion, one need not create any image in one's mind concerning the "dire events of Hebrew prophecy"; one need only read the book of Revelation. Do that, and the images of dire events will be supplied for you. Just what sort of errors and "obvious incongruities," or, worse, "irreconcilable inconsistencies" does Jim think we are up against? If the following glaring, obvious incongruities have not already occurred in your thinking, then they are presented now: 1) how could Christ reign over a crippled human infrastructure? and 2) how could Christ reign over a crippled order of nature's vitality? There you have it. It's like saying, "If everyone in town becomes crippled, then what is left for the crutchmaker to do?" Ah, but nothing could be better for the crutchmaker than a planet full of crippled people. Nothing can be better for Christ than a world finally humbled and desperate for His direct and curative ministrations; that's what the Unveiling is all about. Christ is not coming to congratulate us, but to rescue us.

If we understand that the words of John's Apocalypse will leave the better part of the human population either dead or dying, who, then, will Abraham's descendants teach during their King's authority from Zion?

I never have been very good at math, but I do not believe that "a third of the earth" being burned up (Revelation 8:7), or "a third of the sea" becoming blood (Revelation 8:8), or "a third of the rivers" being fouled (Revelation 8:10), or "a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars" being eclipsed (Revelation 8:12), or "a third of mankind" being killed (Revelation 9:18), constitutes "the better part" of anything. One-third of anything is never the better part, but the lesser part. This much I know.



True, Jim did say, "either dead or dying," but why the assumption that dying people shall never recover, or be taught? Even worse is Jim's assumption that he knows best how many people should be left on Earth at the coming of Christ. If there are only five people remaining, then the answer to Jim's brash query, "Who, then, will Abraham's descendants teach during their King's authority from Zion?" would be, "Abraham's descendants will teach the five remaining people." Let God be true, though every man a liar. The hard thing, apparently, is believing God. We certainly ought to do that rather than scratch our heads wondering how God is going to "pull off" a certain thing that we, in our limited wisdom, cannot fathom how He could possibly pull off. Just how many people would it satisfy *Jim* for the Lord to teach in the early days of the kingdom?

If billions of humanity are nothing more than smoldering corpses at the onset of our Lord's kingdom on Earth, who then can declare "He doeth all things well" (Mark 7:37)?

Here, Jim Burson inadvertently sets himself as judge of what we ought to consider God's well-doing. If something that God does upsets our moral equilibrium, many of us would apparently have little problem calling it "unwell." Gauging Jim's disposition from this paragraph, I doubt that he would call the God-ordered slaughter of the Amalakites (1 Samuel 15:3) "well." What is the difference between one smouldering corpse and a billion? Does God do all things well, or doesn't He? If He does, then let's look squarely at what He does, swallow our own judgment, and call it "well." This is better than running "well" through our personal behavioral filters to become the moral judges of the Deity.

If the oceans no longer exist and the planet is bombarded by astronomic objects, by what means will those in Zion survive on such a ravaged and uninhabitable planet?

When God disrupted the Earth in Genesis 1:2, it was uninhabitable. What did God do? Did He scratch His head in the manner of Jim Burson? No; He made it habitable. Simple. Bookmark that. What is this compared to that? And where does the statement "If the oceans no longer exist" come from? At the inauguration of the Millennium, every ocean still exists. If every living soul *in the seas* eventually dies (Revelation 16:3), the seas remain. Seas are not done away until after the Millennium (Revelation 21:1). I fail to grasp Jim's concern. According to him, the afflictions described in Revelation are *only* for those in Zion. Jim is the one who says that lots of people have to survive so that Jesus can have lots of people to reign over. So why the question of survival? Even Jim Burson must believe that many will survive. God will cause them to survive, astronomic objects be damned.

If the atmosphere "melts with a fervent heat,"
no living organism on the planet would survive.

Not only that, but the Earth *itself* will not survive. Jim is off on his timing by an entire eon. The melting of the elements does not occur until the tail end of the Lord's Day (2 Peter 3:10-13), after the kingdom has run its course, when God destroys this present Earth and creates a new heavens and a new Earth (Revelation 21:1).

EARTH DAY

Understanding the key words in Scripture is critical if one is to grasp levels of magnitude and outcomes. It is rare that the word "earth" is used to imply the entire planet, but rather the region intended by the context. A



study of the Greek word *ge* (surrounding countryside) was sufficient to persuade me of this truth.

The truth is the opposite of what Jim asserts here. The definition of this word, according to the Greek-English Keyword Concordance, is “the solid portion of the earth, as distinguished from the heavens.” It is that portion of the Earth which is drained, in contrast to the sea. It is *not* rare for this word to imply the solid portion of the entire planet; in fact it is the opposite thing that is rare: this word is only rarely translated “land.” Translation is determined by context, and the contexts here are always obvious. Acts 7:29 is a great example—

Now Moses fled at this word, and became a sojourner in the land (*ge*) of Midian, where he begets two sons.

The word “land” there is *ge*. Obviously, it’s not the entire Earth, but the earth of Midian to which Moses fled. It’s the same word translated elsewhere, “earth.” It’s a matter of context, and the context in every occurrence is, as I said, obvious. It’s always, “the land *of* Egypt (Acts 7:36)” or “the land *of* Israel” (Acts 7:3), or “*that* land (Matthew 9:26), or “bringing the ships on land” (Luke 5:11), things like that. The contrast between a specific portion of Earth and the whole Earth is easy to spot. Another example is

Acts 7:4, where Abraham is said to “come out of the land of the Chaldeans.” Did Abraham come out of the *earth* of the Chaldeans? Technically, yes. And technically, Earth is also land, as opposed to water. Again, the scope is determined by context—easy context. See this for yourself on page 171 of the Greek-English Keyword Concordance.

By my count, this word *ge* appears in the Greek Scriptures 251 times. Of these occurrences, only 63 times does the *Concordant Version* translate it “land.” All other times it is “earth,” and it speaks of the entire land-mass of the planet.

Here is the inspired ratio: *ge* is translated “land” 63 times; *ge* is translated “earth” 188 times. So James Burson is right on one particular point: “Understanding the key words in Scripture is critical if one is to grasp levels of magnitude” of the Tribulation. Unfortunately, Jim himself trips on this point of his own making, that is, understanding this key word of Scripture. It is rare for *ge* to *not* refer to the entire planet. Only a few occurrences from the book of Revelation will suffice to show the global nature of Revelation. Revelation 6:14-15—

And heaven recoils as a scroll rolling up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth (*ge*), and the magnates, and the

captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every slave and freeman, hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains.

Revelation 16:14—

And I perceived three unclean spirits, as if frogs (for they are spirits of demons, doing signs), which are going out to the kings of the whole inhabited earth (*ge*), to be mobilizing them for the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Revelation 16:18-19—

And lightnings and voices and thunders occurred. And a great earthquake occurred, such as did not occur since mankind came to be on the earth (*ge*); of such proportions was the quake and so great. And the great city came to be divided into three parts; and the cities of the nations fall.

These are just a few samples; there are 53 other samples. Only 13 times in the book of Revelation is *ge* translated “land.” 53 times it is translated “earth,” and means the entire Earth. So no, it is certainly not “rare” for *ge* to apply to the entire planet, as Jim insists. In the overwhelming majority of occurrences, *ge* *does* apply to the entire planet.

Here is a great example in Revelation of both translations being used in one verse. Revelation 7:1—

And after this I perceived four messengers standing at the four corners of the earth (*ge*), holding the four winds of the earth (*ge*), that the wind may not be blowing on the land (*ge*), nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

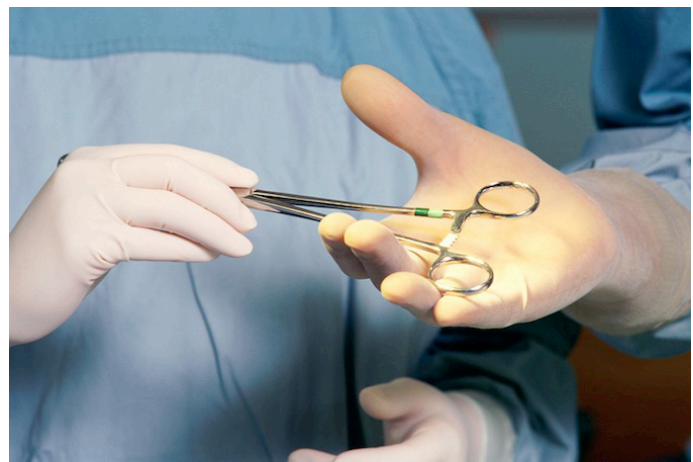
The scenario in this case is global. The Earth consists of both land and sea, so the writer is sure to say that both land and sea are affected, as opposed to one being affected without the other.

KUMBAYA

It is hard (apparently not impossible) for any of these passages in Revelation to be mistaken for local disturbances. “And the cities of the nations fall.” Local? Please. What sort of pre-disposition so works on a man to make him upend the Word of God so violently? Here is your answer, from Jim’s article—

It is a false premise to suppose that all prophecy has behind it a God Who has nothing more in mind than to rage living-havoc on the planet’s natural environs and depopulate its broad continents of individuals who know only of their own dark deities and practice their own even darker behaviors.

The activity of Revelation apparently does not fit Jim’s conception of God. He assumes that when God destroys, He must necessarily be “raging,” that is, out of control. If you have been listening to my Revelation Series (see the web address below), then you know how frequently I point out God’s surgical control throughout these judgments; it



is a third of this, a third of that, 3 1/2 years of this, five months of that. Who has ever said that God has “nothing more in mind” than destruction? Jim assumes this to be the essential nature of a God Who would destroy so sweepingly. But God destroys, that He might restore. God puts to death, that He might make alive (Deuteronomy 32:39). God locks up all together in stubbornness that He might have mercy upon all (Romans 11:32).

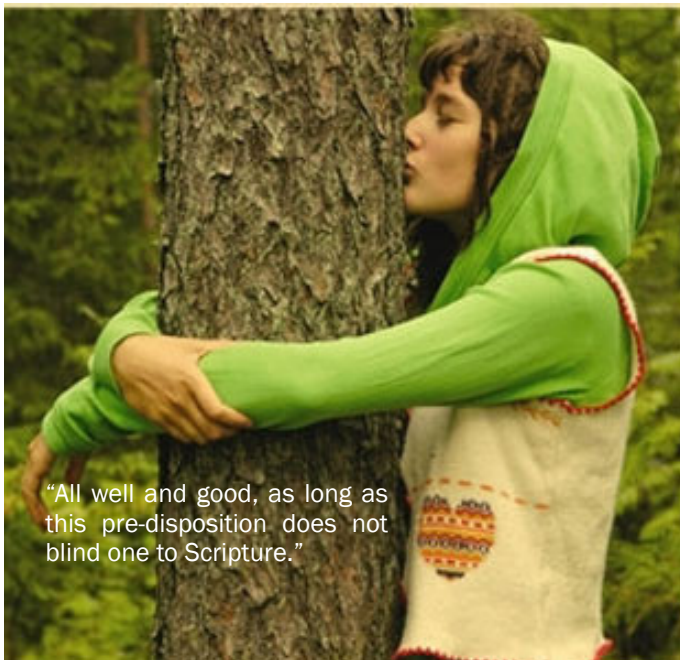
“What is the difference between every single human dying in Adam, and ‘a billion smoldering corpses’?”

What is the difference between God locking all up together in stubbornness, and God destroying the inhabitants of the entire earth? What is the difference between every single human dying in Adam, and “a billion smoldering corpses”? If anyone would stop to think about it,

<http://zenderonrevelation.com/>

one is just as destructive as the other, with the spiritual destruction arguably being the worse of the two. Why is Jim Burson in such denial over global destruction, when he apparently accepts with ease a God who has destined the lot of humanity to death through Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22), and locked up all humans together in stubbornness? Is this a “raging” Deity? Is it a God Who has nothing else in mind but the venting of His righteous indignation? Or is it a God Who always has either restoration or a new creation in view?

I know Jim Burson to be a man of the land. He loves nature. He keeps bees. He analyzes and writes about plants. His heart is soft toward the Earth. This can be seen in his sentence about God “raging living-havoc on the planet’s natural environs.” This sounds to me like the cry of an environmentalist. All well and good—as long as this sentimental, tree-embracing pre-disposition does not blind one to Scripture. God is an environmentalist as well, but He has no problem breaking something—even all of something—in order to remake it better and stronger. Destroy a tree? No problem, says God; there’s plenty more where *that* came from. Jim can’t do this—or wouldn’t do it—and so he turns a blind eye to a God Who most certainly *does* do it, and states plainly that He *will* do it.



God doesn’t need anyone tweaking His testimonies.

My friend Stephen Hill loves Jim Burson’s book, and unfortunately offers up the same human reasoning (i.e. “disbelief”), doubting that God could possibly restore life to a demolished planet. “How could life during

the Millennium be sustainable?” Stephen asks. Then he wrings his hands over “a vast shortage of water, food and plant life.” Ah, what a fine description of the Sinai desert, where these precise conditions backdropped God’s most stupendous miracles. *Stop doubting and smell God’s modus operandi, Stephen.*

No one that I know of celebrates the fact that, at one time in history, God destroyed every living thing on the planet except eight people and a handful of animals. No one that I know of celebrates the fact that this Earth is about to endure a shaking the likes of which it has never known. No one that I know of celebrates the fact that “in Adam, all are dying” (1 Corinthians 15:22), or that “God locks up all together in stubbornness” (Romans 11:32). But no honest seeker that I know of will, due to an emotional pre-disposition, torture God’s Word to preserve things that, in their finite minds, God cannot redeem. Mature believers will look *through* these things into the ensuing restoration.

EMOTIONAL ROLLER COASTERS

Recoiling at human impossibilities. Doubting God. Not listening to Him. Trying to excuse Him. Trying to make things easier on Him. Judging Him by one’s own ethical standards. Convinced that one knows better than He. Running God’s commentary through the sieve of one’s own limitations. Crying. Pleading. Petting our pets. Holding onto our wives and children at the expense of believing the clear words of the Creator *of* wives and children.

The most off-base public teaching I have ever heard was Stephen Hill’s message in Pennsylvania last year that there is an alternate method of salvation: marry a believer. I refuted this teaching in volume 19 of issue 3 of the ZWTF, which you can read via this link below. The video of this talk is unavailable because I wrecked it. I created such a disturbance (in retrospect, I’m thankful), that the video record was destroyed. Otherwise, you would have seen in Stephen’s PowerPoint presentation a frame showing a happy, attractive family gathered at home, smiling buckets. Who doesn’t want their kids to have eonian life? Who doesn’t want their unbelieving spouses to come to God, especially when they look as pleasant as the woman in Stephen’s graphic? So before Stephen set off on his unscriptural supposition, he pulled at the heartstrings of everyone in attendance that day in Pennsylvania.

This is precisely what I see Jim Burson doing, ever so subtly, in his writing in the BSN. He speaks of “the planet’s natural environs” and writes with such softness

<http://www.martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF3.19.pdf>

and sentimentality (which is often mistaken for grace) that we can't help but feel sorry for the poor Earth and the many innocents wandering upon it, namely: "broad continents of individuals who know only of their own dark deities and practice their own even darker behaviors." Surely God would not kill such sorry saps. Oh, but He does. All the time. He is on record as having done it. The world was once full of sorry saps—except for eight people—and God killed them all—men, women and children. He killed them because He knew He would



“Surely God does not kill such sorry saps. Oh, but He does. All the time.”

raise them from the dead and, at the consummation of the eons and give them eternal life together with Him. In the meantime, He wanted them off the stage. They are His; He can do with them what He wants.

I really damaged Clyde's opinion of me when I went after his teaching on marriage several months ago. We're still friends, but damn, things have changed. Maybe my writing style was too flippant. I can be this way. I don't know why it had to happen, but it did. I perceived a man so in love with marriage that he compro-

mised Scripture, namely Ephesians 5:25-33, inadvertently condemning husbands everywhere for not sweating every last drop of blood and giving everything—everything!—to their wives. Clyde cries when he talks about family, and I love this. There is no finer family man. Same with Stephen Hill. Here are model husbands and fathers. But to take this deeply sentimental attachment to families and use it to supplant Scriptural revelation is a disturbing course. Burson would save a tree; Stephen a family; Clyde a wife. I get it. No one wants to lose kids, wives, or sycamores, but we cannot—*cannot*—twist Scripture in order to artificially preserve whatever things *we* hold dear. God will preserve and save these things in His own time, by His own means.*

LEFT BEHIND

Dan Sheridan no longer believes in the snatching away of the body of Christ. Why? I'll let him tell you:

There will not be an event where millions of people suddenly disappear while planes crash, cars crash, and children and babies are “left behind” because their parents are “raptured” to heaven. The concept of being “left behind” is foreign to Scripture.

I'm not sure where Dan gets his idea that “millions of people” are in the body of Christ—if, indeed, he still believes in the body of Christ. (So disturbed am I by Dan's vast doctrinal shifts that I could not go to his website to research these quotes. Instead, I commissioned my “research team” to do it. It's simply too grieving to my spirit and, yes, to my soul, to peruse his material.) The snatching away will be a quiet event consisting of a very few living believers. What troubles me the most about this quote is the part that says, “the concept of being ‘left behind’ is foreign to Scripture.” Is it really? Yesterday, 153,424 people died (go to www.worldometers.info). Supposing that each of them had at least three family members, then 560,272 people got left behind yesterday. And that was just yesterday. Who took these people away, leaving so many grieving loved ones in the lurch? God did. “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

NO CHANCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND BABIES

Ah, the old “children and babies” trick. It's the oldest trick in the book. When it comes to the judgments of God, the mere mention of children and babies works every time on soulish (that is, emotion-ruled) people, caus-

* The teaching of “Open Theism”—or any sort of free will teaching—is also an emotion-based error. It is a failure to believe in God's sovereignty because one “feels” that one is in absolute control. It is yet another example of emotions taking precedence over Scripture.



**"I dare you to
Leave Me behind!"**

ing them to re-think plain Scriptural passages such as the "snatching away" of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, or the Noah account, or 1 Samuel 15:3, or the entire book of Revelation. God is clearly no respecter of persons in the life and death department. There is no need to prove this, everyone knows it. Everyone has seen or experienced it.

But not everyone uses this terrible fact to manipulate the living into casting doubt upon God's plain revelations. Christianity does it, but I never expected Dan Sheridan to resort to such a thing.

The "godly" parents get to go to heaven while their babies are left behind in cribs, to die in car crashes, and abandoned in numerous ways. That's the "blessed hope" of orthodoxy.

Have godly parents ever "gone away," leaving their babies behind? Yes. God has taken many parents in death. Even babies are left behind. I know one woman in Colorado, a believer, whose daughter—a single mother—was killed in a car accident, leaving behind five children. One of her children, I think, was in a crib. (According to Dan, those still in cribs are worthy of our especial sympathy. I admit to not readily understanding this, as children in cribs are less likely to be aware of loss than those out walking on their own. Oh well, I am clearly not up to speed on the finer points of emotional manipulation.) The five children were put up for adoption, came into loving homes, and today are very happy children—including the one that was in the crib. In fact, I think the one in the crib turned out to be the happiest of the bunch.

According to my friend Dan, parents who rise to be with the Lord are ungodly (he puts *godly* in quotation marks), simply because they rise to meet the Lord in the

air at the calling of Christ, as though it is their fondest hope and intention to abandon their children, leaving them to inevitably "die in car crashes" and to hack through a grim life in which they will all naturally be "abandoned in numerous ways." I am sure that Dan must be aware of grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, even adoption services, but I will give him credit here by admitting that it is *still* possible for these children to die in car crashes—eventually. I think that babies in cribs are actually the safest of all—

emotionally, spiritually and bodily—especially with the latest technological advances in the crib industry.

Imagine your three year old little girl in a dress with pig-tails wandering the neighborhood looking for mommy and daddy! But it's ok cause you're in heaven!

Nothing is more pathetic and worthy of our sympathy than a three-year old girl—unless of course it is a three year-old *little* girl. Three year-olds are little enough, but *little* ones get to me every time, as I assume they do you.

If this little three year-old of Sheridan's happy tale had been wearing jeans and a T-shirt, I would say, *let her wander the neighborhood*. I would say, *let her die*. *Let her be abandoned in numerous ways*, is what I would say. But my God—she's in a dress. Now I'm feeling the pressure. Now I'm beginning to wonder if this snatching-away passage of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is even true. I had no idea how cute this girl was going to be, how little she would be, or that she would be wearing a dress. I doubt that Paul was aware that such a girl could ever exist because, if he were, he would surely not have told us that God would take some parents to meet Him in the air and to undoubtedly leave children in their wake, many of whom would be little and wearing dresses.

**"I had no idea how cute this
girl was going to be. Now I'm
feeling the pressure."**

But I am still holding on to my belief in God's Word. I am still having faith that, somehow, the God of the Universe will make it all work out. I am still having faith that God loves my children more than I do (my grown children are no longer in cribs, but they're still cute as can be; but what if they aren't believers? what if they *weren't* cute?) and that He is better able than I ever could be of taking care of them. Who am I to tell God what He should or should not do with my children, or with me? Who am I to suppose that I am the best thing that ever happened to my kids, and that without my multifaceted, effervescent, flawless presence in the world, they would be abandoned in numerous ways, and probably killed in car crashes?

But now this. Sheridan has laid the Bone-Cruncher on me, the Scripture-Crusher, the God-Dasher, the Expectation-Pummeller, and the Rapture-Rupturer, and it is this: *the little three year-old girl is wearing pigtails*. Christ! Now I'm done for. If only she weren't wearing pigtails. *Damn* that hair arrangement! Because honestly, folks: a little three-year old girl in the dress is just entirely too cute already—*entirely* too cute—but add pigtails to the mix? That's the ball game. The snatching away? Forget it. It's over. God lied; Paul lied. God would *never* abandon a girl as cute as this one. The pigtails kicked me

over. You got me, Sheridan! I surrender to the cuteness. Good job.

GOD AND HIS STUPID, CRUEL AND EVIL DOCTRINES

Watch the promoters of this “theology” do a dance by getting into the “age of accountability” crap to try to tone down how stupid, cruel, and evil their doctrine is!

Dan, no one is saying that there is any such thing as the age of accountability. We are all in the same boat as babies in cribs: weak, helpless, unable to believe. It is God Who either appoints one for eonian life, or doesn't (Acts 13:48.) So it doesn't really matter if a person is nine months or ninety years old. It doesn't matter if one is little or big. It doesn't matter if one is wearing blue jeans or a dress. It doesn't matter if one's hair is in a ponytail, a pigtail, hanging straight down one's back, or non-existent. God decides who has eonian life—period. The corollary is that God decides who are unbelievers in this eon. The God Who knows and even participates in the fall of the sparrow, knows and participates in the death of any of humanity; He holds the keys of death and hades (Revelation 1:18). He decides the hour of birth, and the hour of death.

“Mortality comes to all,
regardless of age, race,
color, creed, or hairstyle.”

Mortality comes to all, regardless of age, race, color, creed, or hairstyle. Some go young, some go old. Every one of them is dying. Some never even get out of the womb—how is *that* for cute? Our merciful God is over them all, loves them all, has saved them all, and will gather them all to Himself at the consummation of the eons.

You are calling the doctrine of the snatching away “stupid, cruel, and evil.” By extension, you are calling God “stupid, cruel, and evil.” I know you're not doing this on purpose, but you're doing it. You're doing it because—suddenly, in this past year—you have decided that the snatching away is false. I don't know what, or who, has influenced you. I have no control over it. I can only comment on your words and hope to help others avoid the pitfall. Please note that I am bringing no personal accusation against you. This is not personal. I would not call you names (except to your face; and you know what those





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names are!) I would not ever question your character. You have been a friend to me, and to many. Along with Stephen Hill and Clyde Pilkington, you are a wonderful husband and father. Your wife and your children love you. You will always be my friend. But these new teachings of yours? I have to shake my head. I pray that you do a U-Turn on your U-’Turn. But that’s okay. I don’t have everything right—that would be impossible. I’m not saying I do. We are, somehow, in this together.

LET US STAY ROOTED AND GROUNDED

The “rapture/snatching away” doctrine isn’t gracious, it divides families and leaves babies unattended in their cribs; re-think the “rapture”

We will not re-think the “rapture,” Dan. What we will do is hope that you re-think your re-thinking of the “rapture” and not be so hung-up on cribs and pigtales. What we will do is resist the emotional manipulation that would attempt to talk us out of plainly-stated Scripture. God divides families all the time; it is a hard fact of life. Is God then not gracious? According to you, the answer is “no.” I beg *you* to rethink what you have written here. God is gracious in all His acts.

“I TRUST GOD”

I talked to my friend Aaron Welch about this one day; he is the father of a beautiful young daughter. I don’t think he would mind me paraphrasing him: “Martin, I have thought long and hard about this. I would be lying to you if I did not admit to being disturbed, at first, about leaving my daughter behind, should the Lord return soon. But then I realized that, in Scripture, God is always calling upon us to love Him first. Forsaking all others—relatively speaking—we are to love Him with all our hearts, mind, soul and strength. We are to love His appearing. It does not mean that I do not love my own daughter. It means that I trust God to do the right thing, to take care of her, to have her best interests in mind more than I ever will. If I love God first and foremost, more than any other thing on Earth, then I trust that God will take care of the rest, including my loved ones.”

That is mature faith. *That* is a faith that believes God first, *then* deals with the ensuing emotions. This is the opposite of “The Pigtail Principle,” which considers emotions first, then manipulates Scripture to align it with the emotion.

THE PIGTAIL PRINCIPLE

“The Pigtail Principle,” an erroneous principle (the name of which I have coined today thanks to Dan’s inspiration), reads thusly: “God will not judge, leave behind, or kill anything that is cute, precious, or lovable.” Sentimentality is fine until it colors our vision so that we can no longer correctly read the plainest statements of Scripture. Super-emotionalism is fine until we trick ourselves into imagining that God cries at the same movies we do. “The Pigtail Principle” embraces family life, loves wives, pats little girls on the head, and hugs trees—all well and good—but does so in a manner that compromises divine revelation.

Let God be true, though every man an emotional basket case.

ENEMIES IN THE HOUSE

Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-39—

You should not be inferring that I came to be casting peace on the earth. I did not come to be casting peace, but a sword. For I came to pit a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And the enemies of a man are those of his household. He who is fond of father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me. And he who is fond of son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me. And he who is not taking his cross and following after Me is not worthy of Me. He who is finding his soul will be destroying it, and he who destroys his soul on My account will be finding it.

Holding to “The Pigtail Principle” is the equivalent of finding and keeping one’s soul. It is the assumption that sentimental human love could be superior to the divine variety of love. God does many things that we would not do: He has both actively and passively killed vast numbers of people; He has left behind those whom we would never leave behind; He afflicted His own Son with evils that we would never inflict upon our worst enemies, let alone our sons. By looking to God and trusting Him in all of these hard things—as Abraham did at the sacrifice of Isaac—we lose our own souls. This is when it happens. It happens when we abandon our own dear emotions to gaze into the face of high spiritual realities, administered by the Hand of the One Who really does do all things well. —MZ



FROM THE MAIL

I was glad to see your return to the Revelation Series last week. I was beginning to fear you had been snatched away and that I had been left behind. LOL. Just kidding.

I am really enjoying “The Unveiling” series; I have listened to and watched every program from the very beginning. I have gotten more out of these lectures than all the books I have ever read about “Revelation.” I read H.W. Armstrong’s *The Book of Revelation, Unveiled At Last*, and it is riddled with so many errors, as I see now. This has really been an eye-opener for me.

Keep up the good work, Martin. You are a tremendous blessing to the Body of Christ as you uphold Paul’s evangel. Glad you got a break in early August, even though we really missed you.

I look forward to your program every morning. As soon as it is posted on my email, I jump on it with eager anticipation. God Bless. —L.G. St. Louis, MO

<http://zenderonrevelation.com/>

DEAR FRIENDS,

I AM HAVING A DIFFICULT TIME GETTING TO MY MAIL. I AM READING EVERYTHING, I PROMISE, BUT ALL I AM ABLE TO DO RIGHT NOW IS WRITE ARTICLES AND RECORD. I AM ALSO TYPESETTING BOOKS. I AM FEELING EMOTIONALLY THIN AND WEAK. I WILL DO WHAT I CAN. PLEASE KEEP WRITING. I NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU. I READ EVERYTHING. THANK YOU FOR UNDERSTANDING. IT HAS BEEN A LONG 22 YEARS. —MZ

JIM BURSON; THE MEASURE OF A MAN

I write this hastily on Sunday morning so that this newsletter might be mailed on time.

Yesterday, Kelly and I drove down to Columbus, OH where, at the invitation of Kathy Hartman and her husband Larry, I spoke to a gathering of about 14 people. What a wonderful time of fellowship it was! Tony Nungesser's brother Tim was there; Dale Kelley drove down from Detroit, and Dean and Amy Wilkinson and their daughter Hali came up from Evansville, Indiana. Joe Sattler and Jeff Koch were there. Many others I met for the first time. Also in attendance was James Burson and his wife Marlene.

Some may ask: "Zender, how can you face a man whose article you had just so strongly refuted?" Therein lay the thing. Jim and I are brothers in Christ. What is there to hide? What is there to be afraid of? What is there to worry about? With the bond of spirit, all is well and will be well. I took Jim aside and said, "Jim, you probably know that I strongly disagree with your theology in the book excerpt recently published in the BSN. I just want you to know that I'm dissecting it in tomorrow's ZWTF."

Jim looked at me with all love and sincerity and said, "Good! Have at it, Martin. I welcome it, I really do. I want you to do it. I expect you to do it. I have such respect for your work. Never hold back; we are brothers."

By this time, I was barely holding back tears, and so was he. I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "You are the true measure of a man; this is spiritual maturity; Jim, you are a rare man of God."

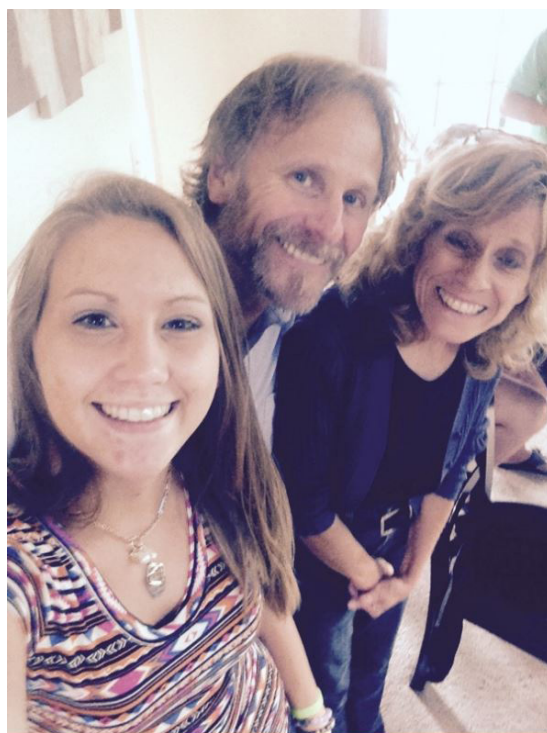
We embraced.

I mentioned our Noah discussion of the year before, and how it had gotten animated and how some people might have been offended at such a "sparky" encounter, or perhaps thought that I had disrespected an elder. Jim brushed this off as though it were a fly that had just landed on his shoulder, "Oh, *please*," he said. "That was nothing. I didn't feel that way at all. I thought nothing about it, except that it was a stimulating conversation. I enjoyed it thoroughly."

Now there is the measure of a man, for all to see. I felt closer to Jim than ever, bathed in spirit. —MZ



Dean Wilkinson, me, Hali, Amy.
August 29, 2015. Grove City, OH.



Hali Wilkinson, me, Kelly.