

## SPECIAL EDITION

### A defense of the expectation of the body of Christ, Part 4:

## “MUTILATION OF THE MYSTERY”



I won't be writing or publishing defenses of Paul's evangel forever—unless the error keeps coming. Even so, I plan on getting back to Romans next Sunday. I don't think anyone can say that this truth is not important enough to defend. Paul's evangel is under attack. His letters are being mutilated. This unwitting attack and mutilation is being conducted by none other than my friend Clyde Pilkington. Clyde does not mean to be doing this, but the damage to the truth is immense and could potentially spread (though I see nothing at-

tractive about it) unless someone undertakes damage control and a correction of the teaching.

Clyde is claiming that Paul's first six letters contain nothing of Paul's specific evangel, but rather impart Israelite truth to the ancient body of Christ. According to the Acts 28 position, nothing in Paul's first six letters is for the body of Christ now. It belongs to Israel. Why the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13) would save his evangel for the last few years of his life, I don't know. The fact is, he wouldn't and didn't.

This false teaching robs you, the members of Christ's body, of many precious secrets unveiled by Paul in his early letters (including Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Galatians)—that is if you believe it. I feel led to correct this teaching by exposing its errors. The Word of God, studied in context and correctly translated, does this; I am merely a conductor. This is for your peace, your understanding, your confidence in Paul, and your truth. I am not willing for you to be robbed of *your* truth. This strange interpretation of Scripture wants to rob you of half of Paul's letters. It asks you to no longer consider the truth in these early letters as anything but old Israel truth. The false teaching says, in essence, *these first six letters of Paul are no longer applicable. They are part of a past era.*



*"I'm here to get the first six letters of Paul back."*

*They contain re-hashed Israel truth. The only truth for you, now, is found in the last seven letters Paul wrote in prison after he officially repudiated the nation Israel.*

In the interest of promoting this view, a new tactic has arisen: reprint past articles from reputable writers which, at first glance, *may* appear to prove the premise of the foreign teaching, but upon a second look, do no such thing and, in fact, do the opposite thing.

### NIGHTMARE OF DOUBT AND CONFUSION

Here is the premise of the mistaken division of Paul's letters, stated by Clyde Pilkington in BSN #490 in an article titled, *The Body of Christ; It's Beginning and Maturity*: "The early ministry and epistles of Paul were founded on the Old Testament and Israel." The early epistles of Paul would include the epistles of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Galatians. *Nothing new from Paul here*, according to the teaching. The teaching goes so far as to claim that, because the passage

**"This teaching robs you of  
many precious truths."**

concerning details of the snatching away of the body of Christ occurs in one of Paul's early letters (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), therefore this truth is *not* for the body of Christ, but is rather in accord with Israel's terrestrial expectation. That no such expectation ever existed for Israel—and no verse can be forwarded in that interest—is no detriment to the proponents of this unique viewpoint, which includes Stephen Hill.

If early Pauline truths are to be relegated to Israel in light of later teaching, then consistency would insist that *every* early Pauline truth be so relegated—from Romans to Corinthians, to Thessalonians, to Galatians. In other words, why are we wasting time with Romans if there is no difference now between, say, Romans and Malachi? Do you see how I'm having a hard time fathoming the depth of the error here? The more I consider it, the more appalling and weird the teaching becomes, and the more of a nightmare of doubt and confusion arises for undiscerning saints.

Clyde has cherry-picked writers such as A.E. Knoch and Adlai Loudy in the interest of—it seems to me—subtly supporting the premise. These by-gone writers themselves would vehemently object to the manner in which they are being

used, but they are not here to defend themselves. In the case of A.E. Knoch, however, he actually does posthumously do that very thing in an article he wrote eight years subsequent to the article reprinted in the *Bible Student's Notebook*, which I will publish here. It is as though Knoch were rising from the dead to object and counter a modern misuse of his thoughts on Acts 28:28. article. In this light, the article is spellbinding.

In addition to the piece by A.E. Knoch, in a few days I will publish an exceptional article by one of our contemporary teachers and writers, Aaron Welch, who critiques Adlai Loudy's article, "The Readjustment Administration," published in 1937 in *Unsearchable Riches Magazine*, Volume 28, and reprinted in the *Bible Student's Notebook* #492.

I wish Clyde were not teaching this. Why him? I love the man. Stephen Hill, too; great man. This is too disturbing not to counter, however. As always, it's about the teaching. The men are my friends; the teaching is awful.



Clyde Pilkington reprinted an article by A.E. Knoch in Volume 490 of the *Bible Student's Notebook*, titled, "Paul's Previous Epistles Need Minor Modifications." The first thing to be noted is that the article is not titled, "Paul's Previous Epistles Contain Only Israel Truth," or "Paul's Previous Epistles Are Obsolete in Light of Later Revelations." Knoch writes in his first paragraph:

The question arises, did the revelation of the secret in Ephesians and its companion epistles annul the previous revelation completely, and ignore its recipients, so that Romans to Galatians and Thessalonians are obsolete ... ?"

Knoch calls this view, which Clyde champions, "extreme" (paragraph 2). Knoch's point in the article is that the nations had been partakers in Paul's evangel, but not "joint-partakers." A.E. Knoch bought into the idea that, early in Paul's ministry, the nations were still subservient to Israel, and that not until the secret of Ephesians 3:6-7 do the nations become "joint enjoyers of an allotment, and a joint body, and joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the evangel of which I became the dispenser." I am coming to doubt even this view, shared by Adlai Loudy. Evidence abounds that early in Paul's ministry there was already neither Jew nor Greek in the body of Christ (Galatians 3:28). What is spectacularly

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new here? In the Ephesians 3:6-7 passage itself, Paul states that he had already "[written] before, in brief" concerning this secret. Certainly there is elaboration here, but such elaboration as is based on earlier revelation. It is simply too much to say that, before this, the nations were inferior to Israelites. Aaron Welch skillfully refutes this notion, as you will read in a few days.

In the article reprinted in the BSN, Knoch in no way implies that Paul's early letters contained Israel-only truth. (In the article you're about to read, he vehemently denies it.) The "minor modification" Knoch calls for is a recognition of the elimination of Israel's priority *in Paul's evangel*. Nowhere in this article does Knoch even entertain the

idea that we are considering anything but Paul's evangel anywhere in Paul's thirteen letters. *Old Israel truth?* Forget it. It's Paul's distinct gospel, right out of the gate. It's new stuff, right out of the gate. Again, the foreign teaching states that Paul's evangel never appears in Paul's own letters prior to his imprisonment in Acts 28, which to me is incredible. *Paul is the "apostle to the nations" for 33 years, and he only gets around to publishing his specific evangel, given him by Christ thirty years before, in the last three years of his life?*

Perhaps Clyde is reading into Knoch's words that the supposed Israelite superiority in Paul's earlier letters means that there is nothing there but Israelite truth. If so, then this is a misapprehension of Knoch.



*"Tell me again why I believe that Paul waited thirty years to get to the point?"*

Recognizing that Paul's ministry goes from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18) is not the same as saying that Paul's special gospel did not begin until Acts 28—thirty years into his ministry. Knoch is vague in places in the re-printed article, I will admit, but he would strenuously object (and does) to being used in the interest of forwarding or even suggesting the treacherous and unsupported "Acts 28" position. Knoch himself, eight years later in 1935, realized how his words could be misapprehended and how he could potentially be used to support the "Acts 28" position, and so he writes a lengthy article of correction and stern warning that will serve us all.



Here is an excerpt of that article, from 1935, titled “The Intermediate Character of Paul’s Earlier Epistles” (the italics are Knoch’s; the sub-headings mine)—

#### “STARTLING, UNWARRANTED DEDUCTIONS”

It is heartening to note that there is a growing interest in “dispensational,” or what some call “mystery” truth. It seems however that a great deal of mystery still clings to it, judging by the extraordinary variety of views, and the many divergent opinions which are seeking to gain recognition. Like almost all newly found truth, it is not well digested. Instead of the facts as a whole being calmly considered, a few striking features are given undue prominence and made the basis of startling deductions which a full survey of the field would show to be unwarranted and untenable.

#### MAKING THESSALONIANS JEWISH IS “TRAGIC”

The main question seems to be to settle just how much Scripture is “Jewish.” The usual method, seeking to make Thessalonians “Jewish” and then rejecting everything therein, would seem fantastic if it were not so tragic. Being the earliest epistles, we must not expect to find the secret set forth in them. But anyone who will compare them with the book of Acts will find that they break with the kingdom, while they *lay the foundation* for the secret. When they deal with the time of the end (which is Jew-

ish), they bring in an entirely new departure *which was never made known by or to the Circumcision who look for the kingdom, yet which is later incorporated into the secret.*

Everything in these early epistles of Paul either belonged to the kingdom economy and has now been left behind, or is a new revelation which was later incorporated into this administration. But we cannot jumble all together and throw it overboard. First Corinthians *distinctly states that a part of it will be abrogated.* Most of the gifts are gone. But that does not prove that other parts of the epistle, *which just as distinctly insist that they will continue* until our Lord comes, are obsolete.

I have sometimes thought that a good-natured insistence on strict adherence to the “mystery” would help much in this matter. Few of those who have much to say about “the mystery” are really clear as to what it actually is. As a consequence they deny the very provisions of the mystery itself. Especially the third item of the secret is ignored, in which the nations are made joint partakers of the *promise* in Christ Jesus through the *evangel of which Paul became the dispenser* (Eph.3:6,7). By these clauses the secret incorporates Paul’s previous evangel as well as promises, and thus *includes* Thessalonians, instead of rejecting it.

**“I have never arbitrarily made Acts 28:28 a Chinese wall to keep out everything from the time before.”**

—A.E. Knoch

#### KNOCH ACCUSED OF ORIGINATING “ACTS 28” POSITION

I have been accused of being the originator of the “division” which is made at Acts 28:28. I acknowledge that, latterly, I may have been the first to point out this great crisis. But I have never arbitrarily made it a Chinese wall to keep out everything from the time before, *contrary to the terms of the secret itself.* All such efforts show only too clearly how little attention has been paid to the one vital matter as to what the mystery really is. If someone should insist that before Acts 28:28 the nations were not *joint* enjoyers with Israel, or a *joint* body or *joint* partakers of the *promise in Christ Jesus through*



“Ever since she adopted the Acts 28 position, we can’t get her to read Thessalonians.”

*the evangel which Paul had dispensed*, I would say, Amen! But to go right against the third item, and say that the promise and the evangel no longer are in force—I would protest most vigorously.

#### ACTS 28: UNWARRANTED TIME BOUNDARY

As this third item of the secret definitely takes over the promises and the evangel which Paul had dispensed *we cannot make a time boundary*, such as Acts 28:28, for anything except the secret itself, that is, what is included in the word *joint*. The body and promise and evangel go back before Acts 28. The celestial allotment indeed, was not clearly revealed before, but, in the perfection epistles, Paul freely refers to the expectation (Col.1:5; Eph.1:12) and the evangel which he had heralded in the past, as still valid.

**“There is nothing in Acts 28:28 to warrant this crisis being taken as the time when all of our blessings were first made known.”**

—A.E. Knoch

There is nothing in Acts 28:28 to warrant this crisis being taken as the time when all of our blessings were first made known. It is not faith to do so. Acts 28:28 marks the administrative boundary of the kingdom economy which is the subject of the book. At the close of Acts we are warranted in looking for some definite word as to the kingdom, and here it is. Corresponding to this we have the revelation of the secret in Ephesians, at about the same time or soon thereafter.

Should we try to understand the “mystery” without Paul’s previous epistles, it would be utterly unintelligible.

#### ILLOGICAL REASONING

This whole attempt at “dividing” the truth is only another example of the difference between *believing* and *reasoning*. We *believe* that we are now joint partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through Paul’s evangel (Eph. 3:6), and refuse to *reason* that this promise (Thessalonians) and evangel (Romans, Corinthians, Galatians) is not for us, simply because it was revealed at a time when the kingdom was still heralded to Israel. A study of the

epistles themselves will show that such reasoning is illogical, for it necessitates still more unbelief. They reveal an administration in which salvation comes to the nations during Israel’s defection, not with the kingdom (Rom.11:11-15).

#### “MUTILATION OF THE MYSTERY”

As an extreme example of this mutilation of the mystery, I have received a clever little pamphlet entitled “Before Acts 28:28 and After.” It consists of fifteen contrasts, which, I sincerely hope, will be a help to many. But the whole idea, that *nothing revealed before Acts 28:28 has any place in the “mystery,”* is false, and leads to artificial and misleading distinctions which have involved the subject in a mist of unsatisfactory uncertainty. No one, for instance, who has accepted the idea that Romans is “Jewish” can intelligently read the epistle without being disconcerted by the many things which



*“All I’m telling you is that I’m tired of artificial, misleading distinctions.”*

contradict that view. And so with all of Paul’s epistles, written before Acts 28. The difference between them and Acts is very great. They present an entirely different expectation and another evangel, despite a slight agreement on some points, such as the priority of Israel.

#### PAUL’S NAME A PROOF OF HIS EVANGEL

God has kept all these things clear and distinct by having Paul put his name at the commencement of

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—A.E. Knoch

every epistle and keeping this special ministry of his out of Acts. He has tied all of Paul’s epistles together, especially Ephesians to Thessalonians and to Romans, by incorporating their message in the mystery and by distinct references to it. Every attempt to destroy this unity and to make the earlier letters “Jewish” leads only to confusion. Paul was the apostle of the *Uncircumcision*. He wrote to the ecclesias among the nations. He resisted Jewish influences, especially in Galatians. He was given a new expectation for *them* and another evangel, and *these have been incorporated into the secret*.

The intelligent reader can trace an almost constant *contrast* between Paul’s early epistles and the book of Acts and at the same time a continuous *preparation* for His latest revelations. Take the conciliation in Romans. There is nothing like it in Acts. But in Ephesians we have it, called the evangel of peace (6:15), and the secret of the evangel (6:19). Indeed, the terms used show that Paul, in spirit, went far beyond the Kingdom heralded in Acts, and entered the new creation. He severs the saints from the earth by snatching them up into the air, and provides them with celestial bodies, so that they are all equipped for the new revelation that their allotment is among the celestials.

## TWO ADMINISTRATIONS OPERATING IN ACTS

The reasoning (for it is not faith) which takes for its premise that every book of the Bible was written in the administration with which it deals, and that only one administration is in force at a given time, is false. We are told that the Unveiling was written by John long after Paul’s epistles. Is it therefore a part of “the mystery?” Epistles could be written during “the period of Acts,” dealing with an entirely different administration, for the “Ephesian” epistle was probably written during the last two years. Long before, Paul wrote in

his epistles many things which are not in the Pentecostal administration. Justification was no part of it. Conciliation was unknown. The secret of the resurrection was in contrast to it. The reasoning is contrary to the facts as well as to the mystery itself.

PAUL MENTIONS ISRAEL; SO WHAT?;  
HE STILL HERALDS HIS EVANGEL

This term “Jewish” is far too illusive to be sound and useful. It can only do harm in this discussion. If we discard everything even remotely connected with Israel we will not have much left. Let us remember that Christ is Messiah, a peculiarly “Jewish” title.



*“It all started when Alice kept insisting that ‘Romans’ was Jewish.”*

Israel came first in time, and the divine vocabulary is based largely on God’s dealings with them. Even if our blessing does not now come through them, it can often be best expressed by borrowing their terms. The kingdom, for instance, is future, yet Paul uses the term of the present (Col.1:13) in a figure.

The two different opinions of Paul’s earlier epistles are the result of two different *methods* of interpretation. In one case the principle is laid down (consciously or subconsciously), that what is written during a given period of *time* must refer to the prevailing administration, and two cannot be under way at the same time. It all flows from the false idea that a “dispensation” is a section of *time*. From this premise results are reasoned which definitely deny some plain passages. The

method we prefer is to examine carefully the exact statements of the apostle, especially as to the secret. Then, without reasoning, we see that they are all in harmony and we can accept them as they stand, making only such modifications as the secret itself calls for. In the first view the early Pauline epistles are “Jewish,” for the kingdom on earth, not for us. In the second, they are intermediate and preparatory for the present.



*“I had a dream that we started drawing the line at Paul’s calling in Acts chapter nine.”*

#### TEARING PAUL’S EPISTLES APART; RUPTURING WHAT GOD HAS JOINED

The first view tears Paul’s epistles apart and draws the line between them. Just where, we prefer not to say, as the principle is so indefinite that there is great variety in its application. To us it appears as a human attempt to rupture what God has joined. Paul’s epistles are eminently for the *Uncircumcision* during Israel’s discomfiture. The fact that they were written *before* the kingdom was finally rejected at Acts 28:28 is not nearly so important as that they were written *after* the kingdom had been rejected in Jerusalem and Judea and the land. In fact, the whole administrative section of Romans (9-11) is based on Israel’s repudiation, and is the very opposite of the kingdom message. The mystery does not *separate* Paul’s earlier ministries from the new revelation, *but is based upon them*.

#### THE REAL LINE IS THE CALLING OF PAUL

The second view leaves the line where God has put it—between Acts and Paul’s epistles as a whole. Acts is a book by itself and its subject is the kingdom for Israel. Paul’s epistles are all joined by his name, and no out-

ward distinction is made between them. In Acts even Paul’s ministry is “Jewish,” that is, all is viewed in relation to the kingdom, though that was constantly receding. In Paul’s epistles this *is not* the viewpoint, even if some words and ways still seem to be “Jewish.” The opposite is the case. In Acts the “hope” is that the kingdom of Israel will come. In Paul’s epistles it is *not* coming until after the fullness of the nations has come in.

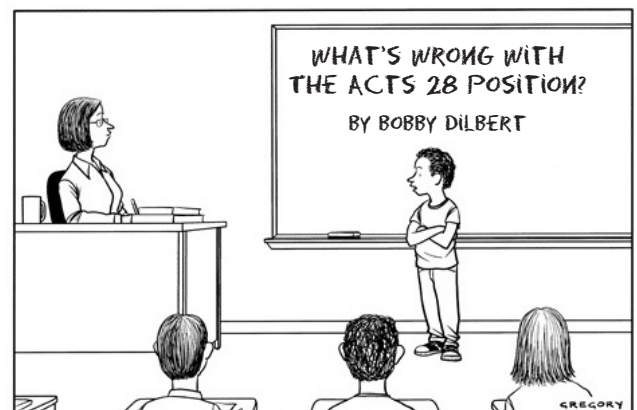
#### EASILY-MADE MISTAKE

As to time, we are not told of the final setting aside of Israel, until the end of Acts. But in the early epistles this is anticipated. Long before the apostle arrived in Rome the fact of Israel’s casting away was made known to the saints in Rome. From this it will be seen how

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—A.E. Knoch

unwise it is to reason about Acts and Paul’s epistles from the standpoint of time. And this is the mistake we so easily fall into. In spirit, in time, these epistles are largely beyond Acts, though written before it. They take Acts 28:28 for granted. Otherwise we would have to conclude that Paul’s letter to the Romans was not written until after he had left Rome, which cannot be. The whole doctrine of conciliation anticipates the end of Acts. Let us not reason about the time.

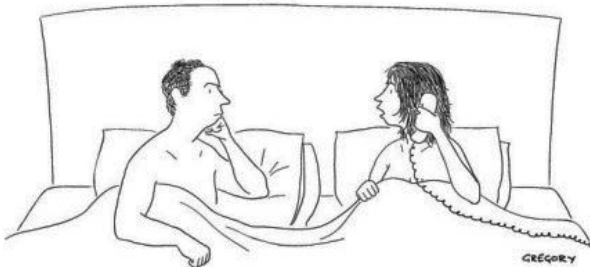


*“In conclusion, Mrs. Appleby, this strikes me as yet another human attempt to rupture what God has joined.”*



## PAUL WRITES TO THE NATIONS, NOT THE JEWS

It seems almost superfluous to insist that the early Pauline epistles were written to the nations, not to the Jews, even though there probably always were some Jews among them. To begin with, Paul was especially commissioned to be the minister of Christ Jesus for the *nations* (Rom.15:16). He was entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision (Gal.2:7), in contrast to Peter for the Circumcision. In Romans he says, “I am saying to you, the nations, inasmuch as, indeed, then, *I am the apostle of the nations*” (Rom.11:13). Nationally, Romans is for the nations *only*. Individually, it also addresses the Jew (2:17). But the Romans are, as a whole, from among the other nations (1:13).



*“It’s Zender. He says we can start reading ‘Galatians’ again.”*

The argument that, when the nations are referred to in the third person, this is a proof that those addressed are Jews (1 Cor. 5:1; Rom.2:14, etc.) falls before the fact that, in the same epistles, the Jews are addressed in the third person also (Rom.1:16; 1 Cor.1:22), so that they must be addressed to neither! This comes out clearly when both are mentioned at once. Paul charges Jews as well as Greeks (Rom.3:9). Such inferences are highly misleading and vain. Let us shun them.

Surely we need not give “proof” that Galatians is for the nations! Ephesians is clearly “Jewish” through verse twelve of the first chapter. But from then on the nations are included, and both are made one in spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:14,15 the Thessalonians are in contrast with the Jews. We submit that Paul’s epistles were addressed to a mixed company, but predominantly belonging to the Uncircumcision. Either class may be addressed separately, or referred to in the third person, as occasion arises. They contain much fresh truth and several secrets unknown before. They do not contain the mystery of Ephesians, but they prepare for it and are largely incorporated into it.

## MUTILATING THE TRUTH; HUMAN REASONING AND ILLOGICAL DEDUCTIONS

The grave feature of this method of handling God’s Word is this: It definitely denies (quite unconsciously, no doubt), what God has said and then actually reasons away vital elements of the mystery by illogical deductions. It is the old story of God’s Word against man’s, but in a most alluring guise, for it appears to champion the highest and maturest truth, even while it mutilates and discards much of it. May God give us grace to cling closely to His own disclosures, to distrust our own deductions. Only then may we have the unspeakable privilege of being initiated into His secret administration, and of enjoying the fullness of its wisdom, grace and love. —AEK



There you have it. Paul’s gospel was always Paul’s gospel from the beginning—not the end—of his ministry. Paul’s early revelations are immediately apart from Israel, and form the foundation for his later revelations. They are added upon, not discarded. We must not assume that, because Israel is “still on the table” throughout the book of Acts, (that is, that the kingdom is still being heralded to Israel) that the letters Paul writes *during* the book of Acts belong to Israel. This would be like saying that, because

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—A.E. Knoch

John wrote Revelation during this administration of grace, that therefore the book of Revelation belongs to the body of Christ. This is illogical. This is where human reasoning comes in to displace faith and mutilate Paul’s gospel.

I hate it when Paul’s gospel gets mutilated.

Long before Paul arrived in Rome, the secret concerning Israel’s casting away and blindness was already made known in an early book, namely Romans. In Acts 28:28, this merely becomes formal. For the body



of Christ, Acts 28:28 is a false line. Modern readers have drawn this line; neither Paul nor the early believer drew it. Modern “scholars” have an agenda; not even sure what it is. I see nothing remotely attractive about the Acts 28 teaching. As Knoch rightly says: “There is nothing in Acts 28:28 to warrant this crisis being taken as the time when all of our blessings were first made known; it is not faith to do so.”

What a great truth that Paul’s name on a letter certifies it as his evangel. This makes sense. Otherwise, when

Clyde and Stephen Hill attempt to make Paul’s early letters Jewish. This is a mistake, and doomed to failure. The “evidence” for it is illogical conclusions based on faulty premises using bad references. As Knoch writes concerning the unity of Paul’s writings, “Every attempt to destroy this unity and to make the earlier letters ‘Jewish’ leads only to confusion.” Isn’t that the truth?

Enough confusion already. —MZ



we see Paul’s name on a letter—is it Circumcision or Uncircumcision truth? We would have to guess. That’s what we’re doing with Clyde’s teaching: guessing. Now we don’t have to guess. If Paul starts a letter with his name, then it’s his gospel. *Period.* The truth is hard enough without mutilating Paul. Clyde, please stop mutilating Paul. You’re mutilating Paul! I know you don’t mean to be.

I believe that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews to help his fellow Israelites understand what had happened to the kingdom, that is, that it would be temporarily postponed. Read the end of the letter; the wording is pure Paul. But do you find his name at the beginning? No. The letter is anonymous. Not only would Paul’s name at the head of the letter condemn it in the eyes of many Jews, it would also confuse

**“If Paul starts a letter with his name, then it’s his gospel.”**

the nations as to their own specific evangel; Paul writes in Hebrews concerning the evangel of the Circumcision. This is another reason why he avoids affixing his name to it.



**M**artin, I’m not going to tell you where I head this, but someone is saying that the snatching away of 1 Thessalonians 4 is not true because God would never separate believing parents from unbelieving children and infants. Can you comment upon this? Thanks! —RS

**H**i, RS. This is a classic example of emotional reasoning versus faith in God. It is a classic example of choosing what we think would be right or wrong for God to do, over what God says He is going to do. While I empathize with the emotional tie to family, I despise the lack of faith. The root of this concern is soulishness, immaturity, unbelief.

The first thing needed is to believe God. Living believers will be snatched away to meet the Lord in the air. That’s what God says. This means that unbelievers will not go. What happens with the unbelievers is God’s responsibility. Is He not a God of love? All right, then Why not trust Him? Well, because we simply don’t.

The assumption is made that we love our children more than God does, and that we know more than God what is best for them. If it is best for them to be unbelievers and therefore not snatched away, then whose responsibility is that? Where is the trust in God to work it for good? At the root of this concern is the human lust for micromanagement. *“I’m the World’s Greatest Parent! Only I can do what is best for my children!”*

As though God never separates parents from children all the time anyway, as well as children from parents and spouses from one another. This is a hard fact of life. God is love, and He is in charge of it all. Just because we don’t like it, let’s not make the terrible mistake of doubting God and whacking Scripture short simply to suit our conceit. —MZ