

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



*Palmer Lake from
Adventure center porch*

Fractured Rapture Tales **Chicken sandwich, Part 2**

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Tale 13 Chicken Sandwich, Part 2

Chicken sandwiches are good and good for you, at least that is the way they are marketed. Chicken is a mild meat, not like wild game. Not overly flavorful, partially because it contains little fat. "It tastes just like chicken!" A couple of meats come to mind when you hear that term, frog legs, and snake, I'm sure you can think of others.

I've don't think I have ever eaten snake, I did have frog legs a couple of times, just to see if they taste like chicken. We eat a lot of chicken these days, because it is supposed to be better for you than red meat. That may be part of it, but I think one component of our purchase decision has to do with its low cost.

We could go on with chicken and how to fix it spiritually for many lessons, but we have probably spent too much time on chickens, and being chicken already. We need to change our emphasis to one of the chicken substitutes, snake. How do you cook a snake?

My vision of snake eating has a cowboy and his buddies sitting around a campfire, chunks of snake meat speared on wooden sticks, slowly roasting over hot coals. That must be the romantic way to eat snake, but are there other ways we eat snake, ways we wouldn't envision?

In Numbers 21:5-9, when Israel complained against Moses' leadership in the wilderness, deadly serpents roamed through the camp as a judgment from God. Moses made a bronze serpent on a pole according to the direction of God, so when anyone who had been bitten by a fiery serpent looked toward the image, they would be saved from God's judgment.

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Four centuries later, the Jews were still burning incense and worshiping this barbecued snake. It took Hezekiah and his determination that the people would worship God alone, to finally have this graven image of religious worship torched. We see this recorded in 2 Kings 18:4,5:

He (Hezekiah) removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image (Asherah, a Canaanite goddess) and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan (Bronze Thing). He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.

I think most humans, regardless of their religious affiliation, would like to have their epitaph recorded in the Bible like what God says about Hezekiah. Even David, a man after God's own heart, did not get this direct praise from God. *Hezekiah trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him.*

We have a problem with the fact that great religious experiences and revelations may take on the personality of idols. "After all it came from God, it has to be good. I'll just teach, as I believe. This knowledge is so important I have to convince others to believe in this great truth."

This idolatry of religious snakes is so inane that we see serpents continually repeated in the Bible all the way from Genesis to Revelation. But for the proper context we must see the reference to Moses and the serpent in John 3:14 as it leads us to the most famous passage in the Bible:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

You don't have to go to a football game, or watch one on television, to know that this is the heart and soul of post modern evangelicalism. Doesn't it just make you want to go out and pass out tracts? But are we really following in the foot steps of Hezekiah, or are we really helping to create an idol out of our own understanding of how God is to be worshiped?

The witness of the church should be that people see a living tract, not receive a piece of paper, but that is the subject for another time. Well, not really, for many times today we substitute information about God, for the truth of God. Paper, electronic bits and bytes of spoken and written words are many times our substance of God in this age.

I'm a promoter of this and also a junkie. I need a fix of a good teaching to give me inspiration, to make my day. But I have to admit it really doesn't make my day. God may use it to make my day, sometimes, but more often than not God makes my day in ways I don't expect, and definitely can not plan for. I suppose it goes to the fundamental core of the difference between the created and the Creator. I have a real problem with that, so I don't like to think about it much.

Our eschatology is the greatest serpent in the church today. Slap that barbecued snake between two pieces of bread, add some special secret sauce, and see if you can choke that down. The real serpent has lost, so he uses our own cunning knowledge about something we truly know very little about, to divide and to show us visions of glory with smoke and mirrors.

It would be easy to blame it all on my roots and I showed up for the rapture and God didn't, but it is much bigger than that. Our eschatology is the snake on the stick that tells us how God is going to handle our future in ways that we can understand. The real neat thing about our personal eschatology, it is like our testimony, we have all got one. And even more prominent than our testimony, we take it out, polish it off and show it to the world, and especially to other Christians, at even a hint of interest or provocation.

Eschatology is our Protestant equivalent of Rosary beads. With enough "Left Behind mantras" and "The Rapture" can happen at any time. I sure look forward to that "Blessed Hope" but "The Rapture" to be honest is only the coolest thing I can imagine, on how God could end this fallen state.

But just a little over a year ago, He gave me another new life in a way I haven't even begun to understand yet. And this is still in this "lost and dying world."

Premillennialism, both Historic and Dispensational, are just one of our mantras of the end times however, but these at least allow God to do something in the future that will “blow our minds.” “Far out, dude!”

Amillennialism and Postmillennialism are in the process, or have got God’s millennium all figured out. What I haven’t yet figured out however, is just how you dismiss the six times the term “a thousand years” is used in the early part of Revelation Chapter 20. Show me how I can handle that little problem and I might change my snake for your snake. I guess I’m just too challenged by my state of intellectual entropy to see how all prophesy could have been fulfilled in 70 AD.

The fundamental question the faux chicken sandwich has to solve is if the grace of God is sufficient to overcome my sinful ignorance of the saving grace found in Jesus Christ alone, is that same grace sufficient to save me from my intellectual arrogance? That arrogance, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, is after all always the serpent in the Bible.

Is it the real Jesus on your stick, or your understanding of Jesus on the stick that saves you. The real Jesus is so much beyond your intellect that only His grace can save you, but He is also so much more loving than your heart can fathom, that only His grace can save you. It is just that simple, completely impossible and too mysterious for you to fully comprehend.

The consummate test for a Christian is who is the God of your life, both your heart and your mind. It isn’t one or the other, Jesus Christ is an all or nothing type of saving Personality. If you are still the god of your intellect or your heart’s provisions, only God’s grace alone can convict you of your sin and the need to be saved from the death curse of your own personality.

I suppose the question could be ask, who’s right and who’s wrong? Or should it really matter? My biased opinion is that there is probably some truth in most of our eschatological views. After the second coming of Jesus Christ, we will all find out it was only God’s grace that saved us even from the folly of our best dogma. I look forward to knowing that my best was appreciated by God, because the blood of Jesus Christ sanctified my life. But it is going to take years before I get over the real rapture of it all.

So does our eschatology serve any temporal useful purpose, if we destroy its serpent’s character? It does if it drives your purpose into the fields of discipleship and evangelism. In certain situations your eschatology will drive how you will act. Those diverse actions are all required to make the church function as the Body of Christ. If our eschatology causes us to do something constructive and not just argue and bicker, it serves the purpose for why we are called.

The true litmus test for a Christian was ask by Jesus of the Disciples in the gospels, “Who do you say that I am?” It was not, “Please explain your eschatology in the light of what I have been teaching you.” If that had been the question, all the disciples would have flunked very soon.

Some way Hezekiah finally got the message that four hundred years was long enough for the typology for Christ’s crucifixion to be understood in Moses’ lifting a serpent on a stick to save Israel in the wilderness. I would guess the Numbers chronicle would have been sufficient from God’s perspective. But there is something about our religious traditions, that reminds us of the wilderness, even if we really don’t know what the wilderness is.

Are you chomping on a serpent sandwich, when you thought it was chicken? Depending on your presuppositions and your paradigms for Bible interpretation, your eschatology can trace its roots from the ascension of Jesus in the Book of Acts, to say in the most strict sense, over a hundred years ago. As you compare your eschatology with the grace of saving faith, it is now a good time to ask, “What would Jesus do?”

Seeds for Prayer

Last week was probably one of the most discouraging weeks I can remember in a long time. One nice thing about getting older is that you forget weeks like last week more easily. That’s a good thing. I did hear from a couple of sources on how eagles get kicked out of their nest. I did finally get some assurance from that analogy.

This week is going to be quite busy, but in the learning to fly on your own scenario it probably fits, but what was reenforced in last week sharp sticks, and to keep everything in the flying mode, the Lord will have to provide the resources to buy the airplane. Please intercede for the provisions and how and when to file a flight plan.