

# Chronicles of Diversity

*Your leadership weekly*



*A winter bridge*

## *Fractured Rapture Tales* **Historical Buts**

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### **Tale 5: Historical Buts**

*“But, I never quite looked at it that way.”*

“But, why didn’t you?”

“Because I didn’t have the right perspective, but I gave it the old college try, and I gave it my best shot.”

“But in yourself, you know you can do no good thing.”

“I know, but I guess I was afraid to look beyond the fog of my own personality.”

“But, why are you so insecure?”

“Because it’s beyond my understanding, but if I would see that we are all messed up, not just me, where could I find any security then?”

The universal question, has but one universal answer, but that is the last thing we want to hear. Because of our sophisticated intellect, reason, and choice we think, even if we don’t have all the answers now, we can find someone who has or can get me out of my dilemma.

Someplace down this broad road, we cross the narrow path of systematic religion. That religion, may appear as any path to God, or a path away from God, but never the less, the reality of that path is that we want to know with certainty things beyond our ability to understand. But if you can only understand the truth of God by faith, we are caught in a swamp of endless buts, serpents, and mud. How do you drain the swamp, when your “but” seems to be your only workable tool?

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You don't have to go very far into the Bible to get down into that Slough of Despair of Bible exposition. In our age of understanding, all you need to look at is the gap between the first and second verses of the Bible. But how can you have a gap when the verse numbers were added only for reference, really a relatively modern convenience. Actually, you have to insert the gap between two sentences. Sentences transcribed for hundreds of years without vowels.

There are two reasons given for the need for this gap of religious custom. But generally coming out of Dispensationalism, there seems to be a need to dissect when the whole does very well by itself. The first, but somewhat the swamp monster of the second, is that how can the perfect God create chaos, there must be something we need to insert here that is chaotic to create "without form and void." The devil must be in the details, lets put his fall here.

So how can God create chaos? The only answer is perfectly. In the beginning, God can create perfect randomness to demonstrate His Glory. Only God can create perfect randomness. Therefore, "In the beginning God" did not share His Glory with satan, never has, never will. Here is a novel thought, outside the confines that we call time, space, and matter, satan never had any power except what God allows, with the creation story that absolute has not changed. In our understanding, the devil is responsible for a whole lot of stuff he is powerless to create. But in the flesh of our personality, it is sure easier to give him credit than to see the fault in ourselves.

Somewhat related to my article on Christmyth, a friend loaned me a book on the pagan roots of our history. This book, whose author belongs to a conservative sect of Messianic Judaism, researches in a somewhat exhaustive manner, the pagan roots of our culture and the Christian religion. So far, through page 22, I have yet to find anything that does not include at least some pagan influences. That includes our uses of the religious names for God, LORD, and Jesus. But, I still have over a hundred and twenty pages to go.

The conclusion I have drawn thus far, is everything has some pagan influences attached to it. As far as I can tell the author is quite disturbed by this. Surrounded by such a chaotic world there can be no hope. Except by the grace of Elohim, or as He is better defined in the tetragram YHWH.

So according to the author of this book, church history is really deeply influenced by all sorts of paganism. He might agree, that at least as it pertains to the true things of God, church history is quite chaotic. Everything is helter-skelter, because there is so much of man and so little of God. At least God in the Biblical context.

But again we may suggest that it is the devil the made us do it. But again, again, no matter the source, the chaos of church history is allowed by God for His purpose. To show the power of His grace and His love? Man that is impossible for me to understand. But if you look at church history there sure were a lot of people really way out there when it comes to their doctrines. Since this is a series of Fractured Rapture Tales, eschatology should be a place to look, all the different views can't be right.

"I know I'm right, but you, I am not too sure about. No, you are wrong, and given enough effort on my part, I can, and will convince you of the error of your ways. You have my word on that."

With eschatology, most of it centers around, or flows from the interpretation of the Book of Revelation, or the Revelation of Jesus Christ as it is now become fashionable to teach. The question really is the meaning of the book title of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Does that just mean that Jesus Christ is the ultimate author, or is it also the whole Revelation of the personality of Jesus Christ, or the Body of Christ, the church. Whether you like it or not, pretty much your eschatology is determined by which of these two paradigms you base your understanding. Both cannot be true unless chaos rules, and only God's grace matters.

Revelation teachers quite readily point out the blessing in Chapter 1:3: *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.* Very seldom does that enthusiasm maintain its zeal when it comes to the warning in Chapter 22:18,19: *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

Now that is a two edged sword that should make you at least look towards the hope of unmerited grace. But if the goal of God is to show His unmerited grace towards His church, do our well reasoned desires for the end times really amount to much more than slightly organized noise, in the chaos of pagan sin? Something to contemplate in the early morning hours.

We have been taught until about the time of Constantine, the church fathers held an eschatology that is generally called Historic Premillennialism. At least one person I know who holds this view, believes in its validity because the closer you are to the beginning of an event (in this case the birth of the church) there is a higher probability of the truth not being corrupted. The problem with this point of view today, is there are very few Historic Premillennialist around with which to develop a discussion. It is definitely a minority position compared to all which follow.

But in contrast to modern Dispensational Premillennialism, the Historic type didn't teach about a rapture to gain a pass by the Great Tribulation period, possibly because they lived in a period of great tribulation.

We all know that Constantine was the savior of these Christians and made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire. To hear modern evangelicals talk, this was the worst curse that satan could have inflicted on the church. Except for Augustine (whoever he was), and a few saints during the Reformation of the 16th century, there were no born again Christians till the Wesleys, Susanna, John, and Charles.

In these dark chaotic years, a new eschatology took root known as Amillennialism, or the Realized Millennium. This teaching basically teaches that the millennium began with the ascension of Jesus Christ in Acts Chapter One. He now rules the earth from His heavenly throne and will return to the earth at the second coming in Revelation 19 and following. This evolutionary perceived darkness is just a creation of our fallen mind.

What all premillennialists will ask "What do you do with the term 'a thousand years' repeated six times in Revelation 20:4-6?" Hopefully, some wise among their realized following could probably respond, "The Book of Revelation is a revelation of the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the thousand years spoken here can not be taken literally, because it refers to the church through all ages. The Great Tribulation is part of the whole church age. You are just not wise enough to understand this darkness in the light of God's kingdom."

So already, we have one Revelation, two revelations of eschatology.

In the early part of the 19th century a new revelation of the revelation of the Book of Revelation arose. This is a spin on the early church premillennial eschatology, but because they were not being persecuted as the pre-Constantine Christians, they wanted to escape the Great Tribulation by being raptured to heaven by God before it happened.

This truly is a new revelation of the Revelation that had not been taught before in church history. Many modern rapture teachers dismiss the facts of this era and point to the early church fathers as their inspiration. In doing so they rewrite history in the least, and might do well to read again the warning in Revelation Chapter 22.

The acknowledged founder of this movement was John Darby, a contemporary of Charles Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers. Darby was the driving force behind a sect known as the Plymouth Brethren. While not much has become of these Brethren, this rapture teaching has become the dominate eschatology in modern evangelicalism. "Spurgeon himself commented on this when he stated regarding Darby's commentary on the Psalms, 'If the author would write in plain English his readers would probably discover that there is nothing very valuable in his remarks.'"

In order to make Dispensationalism work in Bible exposition, the primary assumption is that you can not take just a spiritual presupposition in the application of Bible prophesy, as a Amillennialist does. In fact, it all has to be literal. In that regard when prophecy speaks of Israel it means natural Israel. By literal definition, prophecy can not mean spiritual Israel (the church). This literalism is more than most outside the Dispensational camp can understand or accept.

Taken to the extreme, you are left with two absolute distinctions between Israel and the church, from the beginning of the New Testament dispensation, all the way through the millennial age, until the new heavens and the new earth in Revelation 21,22. However, if just a portion of unfulfilled Israel

prophesy applies to the church, except when specifically expressed as the church, the whole systematic theology breaks down and you are left with a theology without any system at all.

But then we are left with the question for our remaining rapture tales, “Without a dispensational paradigm is the rapture still possible?” The Amillennialist would say no, but again, this eschatological paradigm has no basis to refute the hypothesis, because by definition the literal 1000 year millennium does (can) not exist.

Growing out of the realized millennium, another eschatology began to arise somewhat simultaneously with Dispensationalism. That eschatology is called most commonly Postmillennialism. This eschatology basically states that since Jesus Christ didn’t return after a thousand years, and we are getting close to two thousand years, He might not come back for another two thousand years. The millennial age of peace and tranquility will come about as the church slowly but surely takes its place in God’s kingdom and as the world is slowly converted to Christianity by the church.

Postmillennialism, of course, is seen as a serious error in Bible exposition by all other eschatologies.

All is pagan chaos. There is no hope. No hope, but for the cross of Jesus Christ. But if he just died on a cross as a mortal man, the world would still be condemned. But as the son of God, his death in my stead, if not accepted by propitiation by the Father, I would still, be in my sin. But if He did not rise bodily from the dead, I would have no hope of eternal life. But with that hope, this pagan chaos in which I live, allows me to glimpse darkly God’s glory, and be thankful for His grace, which He alone has allowed me to believe. He alone, is but my portion.

### *Seeds for Prayer*

Last week after looking at a place in NE Washington the previous week, I made an offer on that place on Thursday afternoon. To accompany that offer I wrote a 2000 word introduction along with pictures, to help sell the program. As far as that writing, it was probably the most comprehensive and organized I have ever written in a document of that size. That of course, puts this week well below that level.

Thursday, a few hours after I emailed my offer, a full price offer, all cash, with no contingencies came in. By noon on Friday, they had accepted the other offer. At first I was shocked and heart broken, then depressed. I still don’t understand, and as best as I can put together as this writing, I don’t understand, therefore God must know something that He hasn’t told me at this time. I suppose this reenforces the context of this week’s message. Especially the opening dialog. Please intercede for a direction forward.