

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



Paul Bunyan & Babe

Fractured Rapture Tales Subdued passages

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Tale 6 Subdued rap

Last Friday, I had the opportunity to attend a northwest water resources conference. Since this really is the area of my technical expertise, this was a change of my current lifestyle that was quite interesting. The last speaker of the day gave an overall view of the topic that was intriguing, some of it I may appropriate and adapt for a later article. That's what preachers do! But one thing I do want to mention, related to his reference to the Old Testament, for man's domination over creation.

While the speaker did not give the exact reference he was using, I'm pretty sure, he was referring to Genesis 1:28: *Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

According to the great consensus of environmentalist individuals, this dominating attitude, expressed especially by (evangelical) Christians, is simply and completely responsible for the environmental devastation we find in the world today. In that light, George W. Bush is at least an understudy of the antichrist. (Which is of course relative, I suppose to the definition of antichrist you use.) This environmentalist attitude does have some merit, and it points to the need to use the Bible in its proper context. That first point is that man is supposed to worship the Creator alone, and not Mother Earth from which man impossibly evolved.

Last week we mentioned the error in bringing the devil into the mythical gap between Genesis 1:1,2. This week, pretty much all of humanity leaves out the devil and sin after Genesis 2. The world of Genesis Chapter 1 & 2 is a far different creation than what exists subsequent to these chapters. All

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of western culture seems to believe that this fallen creation would be perfect if man would do more, or less, to control the exploitation of our mother's resources. What is lost, is that the word translated as subdue in this verse had quite different effects before and after the advent of sin and death.

Before the fall, these subduing management techniques are really sort of a stewardship of eternity. After the advent of sin and death, in a world with limits, these same practices result in rape and pillage. What has changed is the nature of man and also the nature of creation. Stewardship is really the term that is most appropriate, before and after the fall, but that implies a vision beyond our own selfishness. When you believe like most of America, that we can do anything if we just employ enough resources to solve the problem, you have the recipe of our current state of decay. It centers in the sin of all mankind.

But what this speaker was really talking about was not the misallocation of Old Testament scriptures, but the application of the Protestant work ethic to the wilderness. This of course comes from the paradigm that the wilderness is a place to be visited with care and reverence. Returning home in our SUV to our place in the 'burbs, we can recycle our waste paper, cans and bottles and truly (mistakenly) believe that we are saving the earth. The wilderness is out there, by our definition. The wilderness is not Seattle, Los Angeles, New York City, Paris, Moscow, or Munich.

As we have stated at other times, the American dream that with the proper stuff, we can solve any problem, does not understand the reality of fallen creation. The most apparent visual representation of that is the limitation of useful water in many areas. In the short of it, the numbers just don't add up. To use the technical term, the ecological energetics of our current cultural world will soon require more energy than economically available to maintain our acceptable living standards. And it really has nothing to do with drilling for oil on the Alaska Wildlife Refuge.

Some of this understanding was part of the document I submitted with the offer I made on the property in Eastern Washington a couple of weeks ago. What I have learned from that experience is that God sometimes takes us through narrow passages to adapt us to His use. Through those narrow places, some of the baggage we all carry has to be left behind, and we learn to travel lighter. We like to say, "When God closes a door, He opens a window." What we really need to understand is statements such as that are of use only on a kitsch plaque on the wall.

What I was left with after that lack of buying experience, is the need to put this ministry on some sort of financial footing that will allow us to buy a facility, the next time it appears. That means a way to pay for a facility without needing to have all the support immediately come from the surrounding area.

With that in mind please read the following excerpt and see if there is anything that you can do to help.

Tale 7 Subdued Babe

The myth of Paul Bunyan and his blue ox Babe, is created by their statues facing west from the shores of Lake Bemidji, Minnesota. From this location near the edge of the great north woods, Paul and his companion must survey far across the tall and short grass prairies to another land of forests ripe for harvest. These first forests on this quest to the Pacific however, are far different than the forests of his north woods home. These forests of the interior mountain ranges, only exist where water is adequate for tree growth. Adjacent to water courses and on mountainous terrain, God provided suitable environments for the limited development of forest lands.

It was only when Paul's vision of prosperity reached the Cascade Mountain ranges of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California was he able to again become the timber baron he so enjoyed in his north woods home. In this habitat, water was again a commodity that allowed for lush forests and he could participate in a community of the American dream that knows no limits.

The arid and semiarid lands of the United States encompass over fifty percent of our land mass. That percentage increases even more when you include the similar areas of Canada and Mexico. Some of this land is desert, but much of it is prairie. The land of where the buffalo roam, Paul and Babe would have only desired to pass through, for by their reckoning this country did not, and could not, provide all the comforts of home.

The native people of these lands lived well, providing for themselves with buffalo meat. Salmon also plied the rivers to their spawning grounds in the Rockies, Selkirks and the Bitterroots, and together with native plants provided for a good life. But these Indians possessed a culture far different than what Paul Bunyan and his other white brethren understood. Paul saw this lack of north woods individualism as primitive, inferior, and uncultured compared to his own, when really it was only different. The native culture required the cooperation of the community to assure individual survival in a land where water was limited and the environment could be unforgiving.

Western culture has yet to truly come to grips with the realities of the west. Of course in our description the west's are different and this dichotomy of definitions is precisely what Wonder Springs was created to focus. Western (European) culture has yet to come to grips with the realities of the (American) west.

The American west is like no other place on earth, but its beauty is something far different than what is known where water is abundant. Scars of misplaced development can be seen for centuries, instead of being overgrown by native or induced vegetation in a few years.

There is no longer time in western culture for story telling, but without stories life becomes meaningless. Put another way, the only roses we have time to smell are those of the greenhouse variety, not those we grow in our own garden. But without the fragrance of a rose garden, the warmth of the sun, the singing of song birds, and the flight of the butterfly, we live a life but of manufactured stuff and planned obsolescence.

Somewhere in a song's lyrics I heard about the difference between modern western culture and the eternal culture of the west. In modern western culture you spend what you earn and then some, in the eternal culture of the west you can only earn what you can spend. That difference is the story of Wonder Springs. The wealth of western culture must be spent immediately, the wealth of the American West must be understood in the grandeur of God's creation.

Wonder Springs Institute

Winter is a season of life that must be dealt with by adapting to the cold, snow, travel limitations, and winter beauty. While summer holds the promise of smelling the roses, in winter you can smell the wood smoke, see and interact with deer, turkeys, and other wildlife in a way that other seasons do not permit.

Seasons, deserts, arid, and semiarid lands are the majority of our natural landscape. What we dare not think, is these same real pictures of the natural landscape take place in our personal lives also. No matter our physical affluence, the trials of life become our trails to the lands where we must live with external environmental factors. These trial trails are as complex and unique as each individual, but just as our native tribes lived in grace in a dry land, community and family are the means by which we are able to survive and prosper in these internal limitations of desires.

How do you color your wilderness? Whether it be an individual desert crossing, or a caravan to a remote oasis, the model of God's creation and God's people should serve a means to provide, resources, friendship, and love on the journey. The trial trails of life really are trails someone, sometime, somewhere has passed this way before. And from their stories we find, grace, peace, hope, and love. But in order to find that companionship, we need a place to get our natural and spiritual provisions for the trip. The concept of Wonder Springs is designed to be one green island in the midst of the sameness of life. From that oasis is where wonder springs.

Life is more than just what we see however, the aspects of human life include all five senses, and to be truly meaningful and lasting they must be shared in community and as culture. By our created nature, humanity is about creative art. Music is one of those gifts of humanity that has no evolutionary basis. Survival of the fittest does not lend itself to joy, and joy in tension with the trial trails of life must be creatively expressed. Music is one art by which God uniquely wired His children.

A wonderful movie expressed that "The hills are alive with the sound of music." While that may not be literally the case for most people, the music of the hills are in a way the expression of much of our art. Their relief simply brings us relief. But to hear that song you must be able to, for a time withdraw, or retreat from the noise of modern society. Wonder Springs is first and foremost a retreat, or a wilderness center, where you can drink in through your whole body the refreshing nature of God's creation.

But Wonder Springs is not just a place to get away from it all, but the place to drink of wonderful water of life. That living water is not something to be hoarded but to be used, to be given away freely.

Seeds for Prayer

Perhaps, an allegory of the Old Testament sacrificial system that we might still be able to understand is an all church barbeque. Since the coming of man to the plains, the BBQ feast is also the essence of the American west. There is something about eating fat meat in abundance, with a large clan of friends that calms the savage nature of humanity. Well, when you think of football tailgate parties, that may not be applicable. But the community aspect is still present, even when the Cougars will some day, (after the rapture?) beat the Huskies.

For some time I have been looking at commercial BBQ's and tents to hold such an event. For example, there is currently a 77' in diameter revival tent available on ebay. It comes complete with the bus to haul it around. That is more than I can afford on my own, but it is not that hard to visualize how just setting up a tent like that would draw a crowd. If the nature of that event would be just to love on people, and not manipulate them to "get saved now" or to put an offering in the plate, to buy an indulgence, so you could not have any fun, then the possibilities move beyond the understanding of what we can do in our own strength.

The church is around primarily to love the brethren. In our insecurity we limit the brethren to those who we know and those who agree with us. While we may believe that this inbreeding brings security, genetically it is the truth of impending death. The only power that can overcome our own death wish, is the power of God's love in us, but more importantly given away, without charge. Any hidden price that is associated with that love, is really an abomination. Northwest native people called this a Potlatch. BBQ's perhaps are our greatest opportunity to overcome those barriers, by community, friendship, and love.