

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS #3

Introduction

I'm concerned about the condition of our country. I'm more concerned about the condition of the Christian church. Why? Because the condition of the country is only a reflection or byproduct of the condition of the Christian Church.

Politics are important. But politics won't save us. We need a revival!

It must begin in the church. Fix the church-fix the nation.

I want to continue our teaching series, 'Ask For The Old Paths' with a mini-series...

"Killing Sacred Cows"

The term 'sacred cow' comes originally from the Hindu religion, where cows must be protected not killed because they may be the reincarnation of a beloved relative. (You can't kill a cow because it might be your Grandma!)

Modern society has taken the term and redefined it...

"Sacred Cow"

An idea, custom, or institution held, unreasonably, to be above criticism.

Cultures develop sacred cows. They are false ideas and beliefs that hurt people; but they are so widely believed and accepted that you're in trouble if you touch them. Think 'evolution' and 'climate change'.

Unfortunately, the Christian Church has created its own sacred cows; false doctrines false beliefs or traditions of man that are so widely accepted and believed that if you touch them you're in trouble. For our purposes...

Theme

Sacred cows in the Christian church are the 'new paths' of modern American Christianity. They are the dearly held doctrines, beliefs and traditions that produce false converts and put God's people in political paralysis.

Tonight I want to take on the sacred cow of dispensational theology, especially the dispensationalist's teaching on the so-called 'secret rapture'.

I call it a sacred cow because it's held so dear by a majority of American Christians who don't realize that it's one of the reasons we lost the last election and our culture is in a mess. But I want to begin by giving you a biblical basis for why killing sacred cows is a key to revival.

I. The Biblical Basis For Killing Sacred Cows

A. The Story of Gideon's Army: A Prophetic Model For America

1. I believe that God is raising up a "Gideon's Army", a remnant of Bible-believing overcomers who can turn the tide in a backslidden nation.

2. God sent the badly outnumbered Gideon into battle to win one of the greatest victories in the Bible; but before the battle God told Gideon there was something he had to do...kill a sacred cow.

3. In Judges 6, the Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon calling him a 'mighty man of valor' and commissioning him to go to war with the Midianites.

Judges 6:12-13

And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!" Gideon said to Him, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

4. The Angel assures him that God is with him. So Gideon agrees to go. But before he can go to battle, first...DON'T MISS THIS...Gideon will have to kill his father's sacred cow!

Judges 6:25-26

Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, "Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it; and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down."

Judges 6:27

So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. But because he feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night.

5. The next morning the men of the city were very angry at Gideon for killing his father's sacred cow and tearing down his altar. (I'll skip the rest but here are the scriptures on it...)

Judges 6:28-29

And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built. So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they had inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing."

Judges 6:30-31

Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it." But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!"

6. The bottom line is that Gideon is a model for our modern day. Before God can use us to take back our country we're going to have to kill some sacred cows!

II. Dispensational Theology and the Secret Rapture

A. My Testimony About The Rapture

1. We were saved in 1971 and baptized in a Southern Baptist church..
2. I was reading my Bible every day but everybody in the church was reading a book about the end-times called, **"The Late Great Planet Earth" by Hal Lindsey.** So I read it too.

3. The book was based on a Dispensational view of the scripture that predicted the decline of the church, the rise of the Antichrist and a worldwide

'Great Tribulation'; but it was popular with the people because it predicted a 'rapture' or 'catching away' of the Church that would rescue God's people before things got too bad.

4. The Late Great Planet Earth was a smash hit, the best-selling non-fiction book of the 1970' at 15 million, with 28 million copies by sold by 1990. He went on to write 35 more books on biblical prophecy.

a. Hal Lindsey, who has been married 4 times, is now 91 years old and has a personal net worth estimated at \$45 million.

b. Prophecy pays. As he said once in an interview:

Hal Lindsey

The future is big business.

c. **There's only one problem: not one of his prophecies have ever been fulfilled!** He predicted the Rapture would occur in 1988. Further false predictions followed in book after book. One Amazon book reviewer said this...

Amazon Book Review

Every 3 years Hal Lindsay writes a new book telling how the world will end in 5 years. Each subsequent book explains how he WASN'T wrong in the previous book and the that the world really will end in 5 years. . . . He has followed this pattern for 30 years. So how he is acknowledged as "the fore-most authority on Biblical prophecy in the world today."?

I'm an electrician. If I had been doing my job POORLY and WRONG for 30 years I doubt I would be "the foremost authority". In fact, I dare say I would have ceased to make a living in my chosen profession in the first 10 years.

5. I am not trying to dis Hal Lindsey-I am trying to dis his doctrine; as a young Christian, I loved his first book. I bought many copies to give to friends and co-workers; but over the years, as I continued to study the Bible. And then...

B. A Funny Thing Happened On My Way To The Rapture

1. Unlike many laymen, I was reading my Bible every day. And what I read in the Bible just didn't match up with Lindsey's book. I began to THINK!

Bertrand Russell (not a Christian)

Most Christians would rather die than think. In fact, they do.

2. Christians consume prophecy books to let other men do their thinking for them when they ought to be reading their Bibles. It took me 10 years to kill the sacred cow and be delivered from the defeatist doctrine of the 'secret rapture'.

3. So let me now offer you...

7 Reasons to Rupture the Rapture

- It has no historical foundation
 - It has no basis in scripture
- It obsesses over the 2nd Coming (something Jesus forbade us to do)
 - It is a sign that simply cannot occur
 - It dishonors the Holy Spirit
 - It promotes a spirit of defeatism
- It produces political paralysis and demotivates Christians from engaging in cultural transformation

III. 7 Reasons To Rupture the Rapture

A. The Doctrine of a Secret Rapture is a 'New Path'; It Has No Historical Foundation

1. The doctrine of the 'secret rapture' (and all the other dispensationalist doctrines) are 'new paths' that got the Christian church off course.

- a. They were never heard of in the first 1800 years of church history!
- b. Here is something from a secular source...

Wikipedia

The idea of a rapture as it is currently defined is not found in historic Christianity but is a relatively recent doctrine of Evangelical Protestantism. The term is most frequently used among Evangelical Protestant theologians in the United States.

2. In his book “Examining The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church”, Messianic Jewish Pastor Marvin Rosenthal tells us...

Marvin Rosenthal

As an established view, it can be traced back to J.N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren in 1830. Some scholars trace its origin back two years earlier to a 20 year old visionary woman named Margaret MacDonald who went into trances and announced there would be a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church.

3. It’s hard to believe that something no one ever heard of has become the prevailing end-time belief of modern American Christians today.

H.A. Ironside

The secret rapture of the Church is scarcely to be found in a single book or sermon 1800 years of church history. If any doubt this statement, let them search the remarks of the Fathers, the theological treatises of the scholastic Divines, Roman Catholic writers, the literature of the Reformation, the sermons and expositions of the Puritans, and the general theological works of the day.

The doctrine of the secret rapture is conspicuous by its absence.

a. In his book “Last Days Madness”, Gary DeMar sums it up...

Gary DeMar

The doctrine of the ‘rapture’ is nowhere to be found in the writings of any Christian writer until the 19th century.

4. Ask yourself this question: Can you name any major doctrine, teaching, or belief that was not discovered during the first 1800 years of church history? Of course not!

5. The discovery of so-called ‘new truth’ is how cults are created! Most of the major Christian cults confounding us today, like Mormonism, Christian Science and Jehovah’s Witnesses, were ‘new revelations’ of Christ never heard before!

B. Second: The Doctrine of a Secret Rapture Has No Basis In Scripture

1. There is not one single verse in the Bible that teaches a secret rapture or a 'catching away' of the Church prior to the final judgment!

2. The verse cited most often comes close is found in Paul's first epistle to the church at Thessalonica where they were concerned about the resurrection of Christians who had died.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-16

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:17-18

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

3. The problem for the rapturists is that this verse refers to the second coming of Christ before the final judgment; there is nothing here to support a belief in a 'secret' rapture! Notice that the Lord's coming is anything but secret!

3 Very Audible Sounds (v.16)

**The Lord is will descend from heaven with a shout.
Accompanied by 'the voice of an archangel'
And the blowing of the 'the trumpet of God'**

a. If the coming of Christ is a 'secret' coming, why would there be so much noise?

b. But some may object, "But only the SAINTS will hear all this."

4. Okay. But what about this verse?

Revelation 1:7

Behold, He is coming in the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

- a. Again, this verse does not about a 'secret' rapture, a coming only experienced by the saints; this is the 2nd coming of Christ!
- b. Every eye will SEE Him (every eye means EVERY EYE)
- c. The secret rapture teachers tell us only Christians will experience it and that it occurs before the Tribulation and before the great conversion of the Jews; but NO-'even those who 'pierced' Him refers to the Jews!

5. Everybody knows Christ came once and He is coming again. But the 'secret rapture' teachers have invented 'middle coming' which doesn't exist! There is only ONE '2nd Coming'.

- a. This is same event Paul wrote about in his first letter to the Church at Corinth...

1 Corinthians 15:51-52

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet*. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

6. I've had some still want to argue. But the truth is that Dispensationalists have to really twist the scriptures to turn the 2nd coming into a 'secret rapture'.

C. Third: The 'Secret Rapture' Promotes an Obsession With the 2nd Coming; Something Jesus Forbade

1. An obsession with the 2nd coming clearly contradicts the teaching of Jesus found in Acts 1, after the resurrection...

Acts 1:4-8

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Acts 1:6-8

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

2. Jesus has already commanded them to fulfil the 'Great Commission'; to disciple the nations; but all they want to talk about is the 2nd coming. But Jesus says, "Don't do that!"

- The timing of the 2nd coming is NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW
- Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit and be My witnesses in this world

3. The modern American church has failed to do what Jesus told us to do and become obsessed with what He specifically told us not to do...become obsessed with figuring out when the end will come.

4. How many multi-millions of dollars have been spent on Christian ministries and TV shows focusing on Bible prophecy about the timing of the rapture that could have been used to make disciples?

5. Seeking a secret rapture has replaced making disciples; and we are all the worse for it.

D. The Secret Rapture is a 'Sign' That Simply Cannot Occur

1. According to the 'Secret Rapture' teachers, the Church can disappear from the earth at any moment; all non-believers will be 'left behind'.

2. The Rapture fanatics tell us that the mysterious disappearance of millions of earthlings will serve as a sign to all unbelievers that they need to be saved.

3. But this is a 'sign' that can simply never occur!!! Jesus said so.

Matthew 12:38-40

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and *no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah*. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

4. Notice: It is an evil and adulterous generation that seeks after a sign. But NO SIGN will be given save one; the 'sign of the prophet Jonah'. What is that? Just as Jonah was 3 days in the belly of the fish so Jesus would be 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the earth and He would be raised just as Jonah was raised.

5. The ONLY sign God will give any generation is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as the only way of salvation!

6. A 'secret rapture', where millions of Christians disappear from the planet as a sign of warning to unbelievers is a sign that can never possibly occur!

E. The Doctrine of a Secret Rapture Dishonors the Ministry of the Holy Spirit

1. Dispensationalists tell us the Old Testament is about the ministry of the Father; the Gospels are about the ministry of the Son; and after the resurrection it's about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

a. So the Father didn't fail; the Son didn't fail; but if the Church is defeated in time and history, it means that the ministry of the Holy Spirit will fail. Unthinkable!

2. The rapturists do not believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit, working through the Church, can defeat the darkness of this present age. Victory can only come through the personal presence of the Lord Jesus! What a dishonor to the power of the Holy Spirit!

3. Besides that, if the Church is suddenly removed from the world, where will the Holy Spirit do His work?

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary

If Christ's servants be secretly caught up (as some think) before the judgments upon the earth, how shall the Gospel be preached up to the end, as Jesus promised in Matthew 24:14?

4. The rapturists tell us that after the rapture the Jews will come to Christ. But how can the Jews, who have not received Christ for 2000 years *with* the Holy Spirit inhabiting the saints possibly be converted to Christ in just 7 years *without* the Holy Spirit who has departed the earth with the saints in a 'rapture'?

5. I will have to cover the last 2 points, which are the most important points, next week; but here's a preview.

F. The Doctrine of the Secret Rapture Assumes the Defeat of the Church

David Chilton

A great obstacle has been an 'eschatology of defeat'. An eschatology is our 'doctrine of last things', our expectation of the future. And there is no question about the recent eschatology of many Christians: We have looked forward to failure. The world is regarded as a sinking ship.

1. Those who cling to the Sacred Cow of a secret rapture assume that it's OK with God if the church goes out as a loser.

2. They think Christ can come back for a battered bride instead of a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle.

3. They are OK with escaping from the world instead of changing the world. Which is the 7th and most serious result of this sacred cow...

G. Belief in an "Any Minute"/Secret Rapture Produces Political Paralysis and Any Attempt to Transform the Culture

1. One of the reason we lose elections and see America failing is the millions of Christians who believe we can't (or even shouldn't) be politically involved.

Brandon Vallorani

The most dangerous element of dispensational theology is the belief that the world will soon come to an end and Christians will be raptured out of the mess they're in.

Brandon Vallorani

While Muslims, Liberals, and Socialists have a vision for the future, most Christians have been duped into believing that time is running out and there is nothing we can do about it. So it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Christians have lost their vision for taking dominion and have been driven underground.

2. To sum it up, the dispensationalists have constructed the sacred cow of a secret rapture taught nowhere in the Bible!

IV. Close

A. What DOES the Bible Teach?

1. The Bible teaches there are 2 'comings' of Christ, not 3.
 - a. The secret rapture teaches something in between the 1st and 2nd coming; a 'secret' rapture exclusive to Christians.
2. The 'secret rapture' presupposes that the Church will be defeated. But David Chilton, in his book "Paradise Restored", tells us the truth...

David Chilton, Paradise Restored

The Bible gives us an eschatology of dominion. It is a solid, confident, Bible-based assurance that before the second coming of Christ, the Gospel will be victorious throughout the whole world.

3. The Christian camp is divided into 2 groups; and it's not Catholic and Protestant; not charismatic and non-charismatic; our division is really between optimists and pessimists.

4. Dispensationalists have created a sacred cow called the secret rapture built for the pessimists who have no faith that the Gospel can prevail in time and history, before the 2nd coming of Christ.

Gary North, "Rapture Fever"

Dispensationalism produces an evasion of responsibility through the invention of a false doctrine: the 'secret' Rapture.

5. This pessimistic view has prevailed in American Christianity since the 1980's, with a predictable result; lost elections and a decaying culture.

a. The pessimists point to America's decline as a sure sign Jesus is coming soon; some even say to fight to change things will delay Christ's coming!

6. The only way back is to 'ask for the old paths' and return to the faith of our fathers, who believed that God called America to be a city set on a hill and a light to the nations; that the Gospel would prevail.

7. God is raising up a Gideon's Army; but before we can go to battle we have to be willing to kill this sacred cow of 'escapism' and take the fight to the enemy.

8. What we believe about the future affects the present! God needs some Gideon's...right now!