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ESCHATOLOGY: THE RAPTURE,
THE SECOND COMING, ETC.

A couple of weeks ago I had a long visit with a missionary who has worked in the Middle East among Muslims for many years. He has a deep love and appreciation for Muslims and has laid down his life to serve them. He will soon leave the United States and go back to his work among them. Many Muslims, perhaps in the thousands, have come to Christ because of his humble, unassuming service to them. He regards radical Islam as a terrible danger not only to us but to his friends in the Muslim community, and he believes it is so evil and corrupt that the only solution is to exterminate them as God used Israel to destroy the Canaanites, unless God reveals some other answer.

As this missionary shared some of his doctrine about Islam with me, I noted the similarity of his perspectives with the teaching of Ellis Skolfield, and he acknowledged that he had read Mr. Skolfield's books and agreed with much of his doctrine (as I do). I just checked online and learned that Ellis Skolfield died in April of this year. Following is the article which I shared in my newsletter of September, 2007:

“A friend passed me a 100-page book entitled The False Prophet that he had downloaded, free of charge, from the website of Ellis Skolfield: www.ellisskolfield.com.

Mr. Skolfield is an author and Bible teacher who received his theological training at Columbia, SC, Bible College in the early 1950's, and has written 5 books on Bible Prophecy, one on Multiple Personality Disorder, and others. He quotes copiously from the Bible to demonstrate his understanding that there will be:

- No one-world government in the future
- No 7-year tribulation
- No pre or mid-tribulation rapture
- No human anti-Christ
- No false prophet who will come on the world scene. Rather, he shows, quite convincingly in my opinion, that the False Prophet was a man named Mohammed and that the final Beast or Anti-Christ is the spirit of Islam.

And Mr. Skolfield has been teaching these things for 28 years (in 2007) he did not just come up with these ideas after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. I will summarize some of his points and refer you to his website for more details:

- The Bible interprets itself, and it always interprets a day prophetically as a year. Thus, Daniel 12:11 says that: *From the time the regular sacrifice was abolished to the time the Abomination of Desolation will be set up will be 1290 days.* The regular sacrifice was abolished during Daniel's lifetime in 583 BC. From then until the building of the Dome of the Rock (the Muslim mosque on the temple mount in Jerusalem) was exactly 1290 years (after making the slight adjustment between the Solar Year and the Hebrew Year), as the mosque was built in 688 AD. The Dome of the Rock is the Abomination of Desolation!
- Likewise, *A time, times, and half a time* (Dan. 7:25) is not three and a half years, but two and a half millennia, or 2500 years. (He explains this.)
- Rev. 11:2 says that the Gentiles will tread on the holy place (the temple mount) for 42 months, or 1278 days. If days are years, that works out to 1278 years from 688 AD until 1967 AD, which was the time of the Six-Day War when Israel once again regained control of Jerusalem and the temple mount.
- The *Time of the Gentiles* was over as of 1967, thus we are now in the end of the end days...and the end is near.

- The two Witnesses are Israel and the Church. The Olive Tree represents Israel, and the Candlesticks represent the Church.
- The Beast that was wounded was Islam, which was defeated by Charles Martel in 732 AD. The Beast came back to life – because of Western oil money.
- The Harlot is the visible church today. Pages 68-80 tell us what the Bible says we are to do in this time.
- The last trumpet comes after the tribulation, at which time the rapture will occur and Christ will come back to earth. (Scriptures provided in pages 84-87.)

I have covered just a few of Mr. Skolfield's points and may have misquoted some of them. He goes on into some other views that I feel are conjectural and unsubstantiated, but I am impressed by his basic thesis that Mohammed is the false prophet and that Islam is the final beast that will try to destroy Israel, Judaism, and Christianity. That Islam, or a violent part of Islam, is intent on doing exactly that is beyond conjecture. The prophetic days/years work out precisely, if he has not done some jiggling to prove his point. And I have given only a sampling of the many prophetic dates and other points he brings into his teaching."

I much prefer Tim LaHayes' doctrine of the Quick Exit Rapture to escape all the blood and suffering of the tribulation. There are a great many Christians who subscribe to the doctrine LaHayes' books represent, including some good friends of mine. While I respect their opinion, I am glad that this is one of those nonessential subjects on which we can agree to disagree. If we get a vote, I'm sure we will all be out of here before the end, but if Mr. Skolfield is right, we had better do what we can to get prepared. I might also mention that there are many respected theologians who do not believe in a pre or mid-tribulation rapture, including John Wimber. The Vineyard focuses on the theology of the Kingdom, on love and service to God and people, and not on eschatology, which seems to lead to a lot of arguments.

Remember that the coming judgment is because of God's love, not a negation of it, and it will give His people an opportunity to reap the huge harvest, the Latter Day Rain, that the Bible prophesies. This is truly the most exciting time in all of history to be alive, but we must be prepared to lay down our lives for the Lord if we want to have a little part in the consummation that God has planned. Remember: God is not going to lose this final battle!

You may want to download Mr. Skolfield's book or read it online, check out the Scriptures, and see what you think.

XANAX, VALIUM, ATIVAN, KLONOPIN; and also AMBIEN AND LUNESTA

Someone sent me an article about prescription drugs by Sally Chew that is very important because I know that many people in our society, including many church people, are using the above named drugs. The first four drugs listed above are benzodiazepines, or benzos. The last two, Ambien and Lunesta, are part of a similar class of pills known as Z-drugs that work much like benzos in the brain and are believed to have the same side effects.

The report says that researchers at France's University of Bordeaux looked at the long-term use of benzos among a group of 10,000 elderly citizens in Canada's Quebec province and determined that: **people who had ever taken one of these pills regularly for six months were 84% more likely to develop Alzheimer's Disease.**

Dementia affects 25 to 30% of those over 80, and Alzheimer's accounts for roughly 70% of that. Dementia has been increasing dramatically in our society, and no one has known why. This report provides a likely answer: because we are a drug-addicted society....and strong drugs, whether street drugs or prescription drugs, always have strong, negative side-effects.

The report says that benzos are very addictive, that up to 44% of chronic users become dependent, and that getting off benzos may be easier said than done. They have been described as harder to quit than heroin. (Only recently a lady told me that she had taken Xanax for several months and that she went through a terrible battle when she tried to quit. She went through severe withdrawal, sleeplessness, anxiety, night-sweats, nausea, physical pain.)

The American Geriatric Society says: "Large scale studies show that the risk of motor vehicle accidents, falls, and hip fractures leading to hospitalization and death can more than double in older adults taking benzos."

For dramatic addiction stories and withdrawal tips, see: benzobuddies.org, and benc.org.uk.

FREE WILL

In a recent magazine article, several scientists agreed that man's free will is an illusion, that we are biologically, chemically, and environmentally predetermined (by our DNA) to make the decisions we do. We are just little robots with skin. With all due respect, they are cuckoo.

One of the central revelations of the Bible is that God created mankind with free will. Adam and Eve, whom the Bible treats as the literal first man and woman and not just as symbols representing mankind, used their freedom to choose independence and self-rule rather than living in relationship and loving submission to their Creator. Their choice corrupted their very nature, and you and I inherited that fallen nature.

The consequences for humanity were dreadful and dramatic: fear, shame, sin, sickness, chaos, war, and death. We were born "rejected by God," so how do we become "accepted by God?" We still retain free will, and the solution provided by God was for us to be born again through faith in the Savior who died on the cross for our sins. John 3:16 is the most loved Scripture in the Bible, but the verses following Vs. 16 are frightening in their implication – and remember that these are red-letter words, words of Jesus Christ Himself: *For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. God sent his son into the world not to judge the world but to save the world through him. There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him, but anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but the people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil....*

Think about this: God gave his Son to save everyone in the world from the penalty for their sin and rebellion. Everyone in the world has been freely forgiven for their sins because Jesus took everyone's sins on the cross, but each person has free will and must choose to believe in Christ and receive forgiveness and the gift of eternal life. So in one sense, people will not be judged for their sins but for their rejection and unbelief in God's incredible gift. Yes, the Bible makes clear that everyone on earth will be judged for their actions. Believers will stand at the "Judgment Seat of Christ" and be judged to determine their rewards. (See 2 Cor. 5:10 & 1 Cor. 3:12) Unbelievers will be judged at the "Great White Throne" (See Rev. 20:11-15) and be judged for their sins because they *refused to believe in God's one and only Son*. Romans chapter 1 clearly states that: *All sinful people know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them....so they will have no excuse* as they stand before him in judgment.

These are the points I want to make about free will:

1. Faith in Christ comes *from hearing the Good News about Christ* (Romans 10:17). But faith does not overwhelm us, we must choose to believe. Joshua said: *Choose this day whom you will serve.....but for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*. (Josh. 24:15) There is no such thing as sitting on the fence regarding faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *Those who are not for me are against me*.
2. Faith in God and trust in God are inseparable. In times of stress and confusion, we must choose to trust in God. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding....*(Prov. 3:5).
3. We must also use our free will to choose to believe in the Bible as the word of God. The Bible is self-authenticating. The more you read and study it, the more clear it becomes that it is the work of a Genius beyond compare. But to unbelievers it is weird and unconvincing. Peter declares that no Scripture came from the human writer himself, but *they were moved by the Holy Spirit and spoke from God*. (1 Pe. 1:20)
4. Continually, throughout our lifetime, we must choose not only to believe in the Lord mentally, but we must choose to obey him. The Biblical word faith always includes the idea of action, of obedience. *Anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish...*(Mt. 7:24-27) *Don't merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says*. (Jas. 1:22)
5. The Bible reveals that in our natural state we cannot do the will of God, and in fact we don't even desire to do it. But when we receive Christ through faith, God gives us *the desire and the ability (power) to do what pleases him*. (Phil. 2:13) Not only that, but the Holy Spirit produces fruit in our lives of *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*. (Gal. 5:22) But, amazingly, God continues to honor the free will he has given us so that the fruit of the Spirit does not arise unbidden from within us, but in every case we must choose to so act: *Love one another; husbands, love your wives; love your enemies. Be kind to one another. Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, gentleness, and patience. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts*.

As you start this day, you choose whether to walk in faith and obedience in Christ. To not say yes to God is to say no to him. We will be judged by our actions, not by what we say.

Choose you this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

THE PEOPLE WHO WORE NO SHOES

Once upon a time an explorer sailed his ship into the northern latitudes where there was much snow and ice and, much to his amazement, he discovered a hitherto unknown society that was quite advanced. He found a beautiful city with large buildings and comfortable homes. But as he walked among the well-dressed citizens he immediately noticed that they were all bare-footed. There was snow on the ground, and the people's feet were chapped and sore. They looked very uncomfortable.

He spoke to an intelligent looking gentleman and said, "Excuse me, sir, but I notice that no one in your city is wearing shoes. Don't you folks know about shoes?" The man acted rather affronted. He responded, "Well, of course we know about shoes! Do you think we are stupid?"

"Well," the explorer said, "Since you know about shoes but you are not wearing shoes, I presume that for some reason you don't believe in wearing shoes?" The man became somewhat belligerent. He said, "Listen, stranger, I don't like your attitude. We not only know about shoes, but we believe in shoes."

The explorer persisted, "My friend, I am not intending to insult you. I'm just trying to find out - - if you know about shoes and you believe in shoes, why aren't you wearing shoes?" The man looked thoughtful. He said, "You know, that is a good question. Why don't we wear shoes?"

Once upon a time a Christian explorer discovered a land that had many beautiful church buildings. He started walking among the people and observing their way of life, and after spending many days among them he noticed that they did not pray. He spoke to a pious looking gentleman and said, "Excuse me, sir, but I notice that no one in your church is spending time in prayer. Don't you folks know about prayer?" The man responded, "Well, of course we know about prayer! We are Christians, we go to church!"

The explorer said, "But, my friend, if you know about prayer, then I presume that you don't believe in praying?" The man responded, "Listen, stranger, I don't like your attitude. We not only know about prayer, but we believe in prayer."

The explorer persisted, "My friend, I don't understand. If you people know about prayer, and if you believe in prayer, then why don't you pray?" The man looked thoughtful. He said, "I hadn't really thought about that. That is a good question. Why don't we pray?"

A MODERN DAY SIMEON

Leonard Ravehill, who died in November, 1994, is considered one of the most influential Christians of modern times. His all-time bestseller, Why Revival Tarries, became essential reading for serious Christians. He and John Wimber bonded at their first meeting, and John asked him to speak at the Anaheim Vineyard and to hold a special Holiness Conference.

Rick Joyner wrote that when Leonard began to speak people started to fall on their faces before the Lord. Soon there were more on the floor than in the seats, and the groans of repentance began to drown out Leonard's frail voice. Leonard was a brilliant preacher, but it was not his words that were causing this response, rather the Holy Spirit moving in conviction. People were getting free of old yokes, and a love and devotion to the Lord and His cross came upon them.

Some of Leonard Ravenhill's wisdom:

- If weak in prayer, we are weak everywhere.
- A sinning man stops praying, a praying man stops sinning.
- Entertainment is the devil's substitute for joy.
- Today's church wants to be raptured from responsibility.
- If Jesus had preached the same message that ministers preach today, He would never have been crucified.

God Bless Glenn

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CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S SCHEDULE

Dec. 24 – Thurs – Christmas Eve. Family Services 3 PM and 5

PM. (Children & Youth Worship with family; nursery open.)

Dec. 27 – Sun – Services as usual (9 & 11 AM)

Dec. 28 – Mon – Church campus closed for Christmas Day

Dec. 30 – Wed – 7 PM – Blessing Service in the Chapel. (Worship, Message by Glenn Brown, Blessing by the Elders)

(For some reason, I thought I would emphasize this service.)

Jan 3 – Sun – Services as usual (9AM and 11 AM)

Jan 4 – Mon – Church campus closed for New Year's Day

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

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