



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. -

Matthew 15:9

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Blinded by the Dark Glasses

There is a passage in the Bible that has bothered me for so long I don't know when I became perturbed with it. My guess is that I didn't like it the first time I read it and until tonight I was still confused about it. Let me share that verse with you:

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. – 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 KJV

I was raised on the King James. It wasn't until I was married and around 19 or maybe 20 that I learned there were other versions of the Bible. My then mother-in-law gave me a New International Version and told me that I would like it much better. It was her attempt to try to get me to read the Bible which I declined. Several years later I still had that Bible (I still do today and I'm 61) and was glad that I had kept it. I began reading it but my training had been to read and understand it literally. So this passage above bothered me.

For starters, what did that mean that those who were alive wouldn't prevent those who are asleep? Prevent them from what? That's goofy writing. But my biggest concern was that this passage indicates that God isn't fair. He's going to play favorites with those who have died while those who are still alive and have

passed through a time more terrible than ever experienced in history have to wait to be rescued. I still felt slighted.

But God's ways are not our ways so I had to bite my lip and accept that he plays favorites. In order to preserve my love for him I had to take this passage and stuff it into a box where I wouldn't have to deal with it.

Tonight it occurred to me that this interpretation couldn't be accurate. God loves us all equally. Yes, to some he gives more attention than to others but He still loves us equally. He will give more attention to those who need it in order to strengthen their faith, or He gives more attention to those who give more of their attention to him.

During our Bible study earlier we read through Isaiah, chapters 29 and 30. In those chapters God states that we are blind and cannot see. Isaiah is a book that I have always pushed aside because I was blind and couldn't see the beauty in there. It was just nonsense to me. But as we are going through that book I'm finding that those dark colored glasses I've been wearing are beginning to clear and the book is filled with wonderful and meaningful passages. When I read it through the lens of the natural law and not the lens of the human law construct, the book becomes alive and I see a God in there that I am thrilled to know and worship.

Could it be that my eyes have been blinded to the text in Thessalonians? I looked it up in the NIV to see their interpretation.

According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. – 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

This Bible version clears up the use of the word "prevent." According to them we won't precede those who have died. But this still left me with the thought that God is being unfair because they get to go first. Should I just suck it up, put on my big-girl panties and get over it? Perhaps, but then, perhaps not. It shows God to be practicing favoritism and he's giving those who haven't experienced the end of times on this earth as we know it which is a time that is prophesied to be more deadly than any other time in history. In fact, the Bible states that there

will be a song that only the 144,000 will be able to sing and that is the song of their experience (Revelation 14:3).

Perhaps I needed to look further. I checked the NIRV (New International Readers Version) and found what my common sense was telling me had to be correct. Look at this:

This agrees with what the Lord has said. When the Lord comes, many of us will still be alive. We tell you that we will certainly not go up before those who have died. The Lord himself will come down from heaven. We will hear a loud command. We will hear the voice of the leader of the angels. We will hear a blast from God's trumpet. Many who believe in Christ will have died already. They will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them. We will be taken up in the clouds. We will meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with him forever. – 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

According to this version God will raise the dead first. Think about that. He's raising them from the grave, giving them back their life. Those who are still alive don't need to be raised because they never died. Common sense should tell you that you can't raise from the dead someone who isn't dead.

And take a look at the dead he is raising. He will first raise those who died knowing and loving him. Later he will bring back to life those who died not knowing him and wanting nothing to do with him. They will be raised to receive the reward they insisted upon having which is eternal separation from the source of life. This resurrection will be their opportunity to understand just what they have refused. (Revelation 20:5, 9) (*The Great Controversy*, 542, 543)

As for those who never died and don't need to be resurrected, they will be caught up along with those who were resurrected and taken into the clouds to meet Jesus in the air. If they are taken up along with, then they are taken up together – at the same time.

There are people, pastors included, who will tell you that you need to leave your common sense out of Bible interpretation. Just park your brains and let the church dictate what you are to believe. But when the church or the pastor is preaching a false picture of God then you had better be using your brains and recognize there is an error in his doctrine. Your very life is dependent upon knowing the truth about God. When you know him you will love him. (1 John 4:8)

So think this through for yourselves. Which picture of God is the more loving picture? A God who loves us all equally or a god who plays favorites? Which one will you serve?

And with that I wish you a happy Sabbath.

Love to you all,

Hannah