

# Mind Your Own Business

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**By Dr. Rick Flanders**

*“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

(Acts 1:6-8)

The Acts of the Apostles opens with the account of our Lord’s forty-day “Bible conference” with “the apostles whom he had chosen,” in which He taught them “things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” Wouldn’t you have loved to have been there with them? The risen Christ was preparing them to fulfill their role in the next phase of God’s dealing with mankind. The Kingdom of God is an important theme of all the Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, and Jesus showed His disciples how they were going to operate in the spiritual form the Kingdom would take in the Church Age. This new era would be inaugurated by His return to Heaven and by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon His people. This outpouring He called in verse 4 of chapter 1 “the promise of the Father.” In verse 5 He called it their being “baptized with the Holy Ghost,” and said that it was going to happen “not many days” away. When they heard this news, they apparently thought that it meant that the visible, physical form of the Kingdom of God, with Jesus reigning over the whole world on the throne of David, would begin soon. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus had told them, “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30). As students of the Old Testament scriptures, they were familiar with the concept of God’s Spirit coming upon an individual. It always happened in order to give him supernatural power. Such an experience gave Moses and Joshua supernatural power to lead, the judges supernatural power to fight, and the prophets supernatural power to convey the Word of the Lord. Since they would soon be immersed (baptized) in the Spirit, were they to receive divine enablement to rule over Israel? Would the Kingdom soon be restored to Israel? The answer the Lord Jesus gave them is very important to our thinking as servants of Christ two thousand years later. He said, “It is not for you to know...” certain things. Some matters, such as when Christ is going to set up His earthly Kingdom, are none of our business. Other things *are* our business. And we should strive always to mind our own business!

## 1. “The Times or the Seasons” Are None of Our Business.

Christians have always been fascinated with questions about when things are going to happen in God’s prophetic plan. Acts 1:6 records only the *first* time preachers asked if the Kingdom, or the Tribulation, or the Rapture, would come “at this time.” But the Lord said it was not for us to know. Some good pre-millennial, pre-tribulational preachers teased us about the time of the coming of Christ, and hinted at dates for the Lord’s return, but have defended themselves by insisting that they are not stating the day or the hour, but only pointing to the times and seasons. They say (and I have heard them say it) that the Lord said we would not know the day or the hour of His coming, but that we can know that we are in the times or the seasons that are near that coming. If their calculations and information is correct, they have said, certain things prophesied for after the Rapture will actually happen in a particular year, and by then we will be gone! This approximate date-setting has a sad and embarrassing history, as these particular years have come and gone. Do you remember the sermons about the “shocking signs of the end” that were to happen in 1976, 1984, and then at the arrival of the new millennium? Of course, they didn’t happen, and neither did the Rapture, but the kind of preaching that asserts the nearness of Christ’s coming is still being justified because it does not set an actual date. However, Jesus specifically said it is not for us to know the times or the seasons of these future events, and not just the exact day and hour.

This teaching (the imminent but unknowable time of Christ’s return for His own) is repeated in Paul’s Thessalonian epistles. After the simple but glorious description of the Rapture of the Saints at the end of chapter 4 of I Thessalonians (in verses 13 through 18), Paul begins the fifth chapter with these words:

*“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.”*

But why do the readers have no need for Paul to write them about the times or the seasons? Verse 2 explains.

*“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”*

The Day of the Lord is a term the prophets used to refer to the time in the future when God is going to punish the nations of the world for their rebellion against Him (as in Isaiah 13). This time will begin, according to the teaching of II Thessalonians 2 (which we will examine later) and the rest of the New Testament, will commence after the Christians are taken out of the world in the Rapture. It was Jesus Who said that it would all happen suddenly and unexpectedly, like the coming of a thief in the night.

*“But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”*

This is exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 24:43-44. His coming will be unexpected, like the coming of a thief. The main thing Jesus taught about His coming for His own was that it will be unexpected. Just before the above passage, we read,

*“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall the also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”*

(Matthew 24:36-42)

The flood came unexpectedly upon the world of sinners, just after the family of Noah (who had found grace in the eyes of the Lord) were safe and secure in the ark. In the same way, the Rapture of the Saints will spare believers from the Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord will happen unexpectedly for the unsaved. I Thessalonians 5 continues in this vein.

*“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are the children of light, and children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober...”*

(verses 3 through 6; but read all the way through verse 11)

First Thessalonians teaches that the coming of Christ for His own (the Rapture of the Saints), which inaugurates the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation culminating in the Kingdom), will come unexpectedly, and that we cannot know the times or the seasons that will lead up to it. Remember that Jesus said it was none of our business.

Second Thessalonians 2 begins with a reference in verse one to “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and...our gathering together unto him” (the Rapture). It then goes on to warn against the false teaching that “the day of Christ is at hand [present]” (verses 2 and 3). That day (which is the Day of the Lord) will not come until “what withholdeth...be taken out of the way” (verses 4 through 12). All of the events that are to characterize the evil times of the Tribulation can only happen after the departure of what hinders them. What hinders the occurrence of these things (the rise of the Antichrist and his awful acts), for which “the mystery of iniquity” has been working for centuries, is the presence of the people of Christ, whom He called in Matthew 5, the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.” When we are gone, the prophecies of the end times will be fulfilled. These signs will not happen until we are gone to Heaven with Christ. And the time of the Rapture is none of our business.

Some years ago, an evangelist friend of mine had a conversation with a good pastor who was misled by the thinking that has hindered good people for years. The pastor said, “We can be pretty sure that we won’t be around in 1985 (or some such year yet future at the time).” He was a little startled when the evangelist replied, “Why do you say that?” This kind of thinking and talking has become so accepted among Bible-believers that to question it seems almost heretical. “Well, with all the signs that are being fulfilled, it is clear that the Rapture will be very soon,” was the pastor’s response. Then the evangelist

asked him, "What signs?" The pastor could not give a definitive answer. The reason he could not do so is that no direct statements of scripture in regard to signs of the soon establishment of the Kingdom, and certainly no signs of the Rapture, have actually been fulfilled! It is true that current events often seem to indicate that the international situation that will exist when the Antichrist rules might soon come to pass, but this is because "the mystery of iniquity doth already work," and the forces of evil are always trying to set up that situation. It has happened again and again in history that the empire of Antichrist looks as if it will soon be established, only for the pieces to fall apart. The reason this happens is that the Devil is trying to put his man in charge of the world, but he cannot do it until we are gone. Therefore the "signs of the times" will all happen in the Tribulation and the days of the Antichrist, and none of them are not for us. It is not for us to know, and there is no need for us to study, the times or the seasons. This is none of our business! It is God's business alone. The whole scenario that will bring in the Kingdom of Christ will begin when the Father says to the Son, "It's time," and Jesus comes to receive us to Himself. The timing of this is not for us to know.

## **2. Acts 1:8 is our business!**

On the Mount of Olives, just before His ascension to Heaven, our Lord said the "it is not for you to know the times or the seasons" of God's plans for His Kingdom, and then He said,

*"But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."*

(Acts 1:8)

The timing of God's program is not our business, but our part in that program is our business. The apostles of that day, and all the Christians that have followed them, had the responsibility of minding their own business, which is Acts 1:8. In the Parable of the Pounds (recorded in Luke 19:11-27) the Lord put it this way: "Occupy [do business] till I come." Our business then is threefold.

a. To be filled with the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost came upon God's people on the Day of Pentecost, and He has indwelt them ever since. Ephesians 1 calls it being "sealed with the Spirit," and it happened to us when we "believed" in Christ for our salvation. The Holy Spirit lives within every true believer, but it is the will of God that He also fill us. Ephesians 5:18 commands those who have already been sealed with the Spirit to be "filled with the Spirit." It is both our privilege and also our duty to be Spirit-filled. This fullness is experienced when we yield in absolute obedience to our Savior. Then the great Resident of our lives becomes, so to speak, the President of our lives. The result of His filling is victory in the Christian life, and power in our Christian witness. It is our business to be filled with the Spirit every day.

b. To be witnesses for Christ.

God intends for all believers to be His witnesses. Acts 1:8 does not just say that we are to witness for Him, but rather that we must be His witnesses. You can't be a witness without testifying, but being a witness for Christ is more than telling people about Him. The Holy Spirit

can make us His witnesses, by putting His power into both our lives and our words. Christians are commanded to spread the Gospel at home and abroad, and we must attend to doing it because it is our business. We must saturate our Jerusalems, Judeas, and Samarias with the Light of Christ, and we must be at it now!

c. To take the Gospel to the uttermost part of the earth.

Jesus looked at the apostles right in the eye and told them that they would be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. When He said these words, He looked as if He meant them. And He did mean them. An impossible task is possible when God is involved! Acts 1:8 begins with our being endowed with the power of God's Spirit, and moves to our taking the story of salvation to the uttermost part. The Lord is serious about the Great Commission, and we should be, too. It is our business to pray and yield for the filling of His Spirit, to give ourselves to the work of evangelism in the Spirit's power, and to send those among us that God will call to other places in order to tell everyone everywhere about the love of Christ!

For a long time, the Lord's people have been distracted from their primary duties by wrong attitudes toward Bible prophecy. God did not tell us about future events in order to make us smarter than other people. The purpose of prophecy is not to make us into skilled predictors of world events. Prophecy is given so that we might have the blessed hope that comes from knowing that God will finally prevail over evil, and this hope is given to cheer us and encourage us every day as we mind our own business. The truth about the future was not given to us to cause us to feel released from our duty to evangelize the world. Let us get our eschatology straight, and start now in earnest minding our own business!