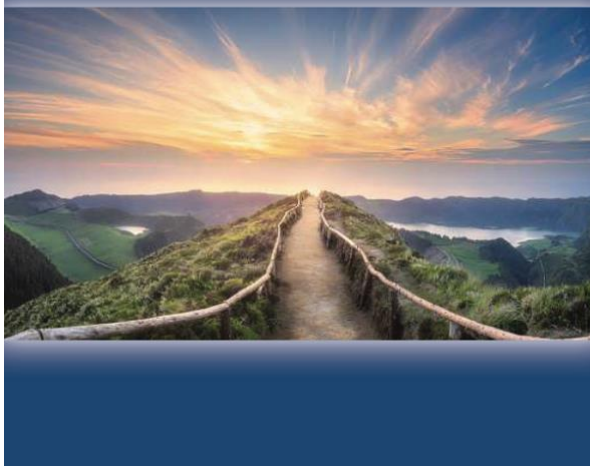


Revelation's GUARDRAILS



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Revelation's Guardrails

By Steve Rauen

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Revelation's GUARDRAILS



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INTRODUCTION, PART ONE: THE PERPETUAL PROBLEM

In the introduction for this book, I'm going to take the unusual step of recommending to the reader's attention *another* book, a copy of which I own. *More* unusual, I do *not* concur with what seems to be the author's ultimate conclusion: *eventually, ... someone... will* get it right; someone in the future will predict with accuracy the timing of the "Second Coming of Christ" and all other "End-Times" events. At least, that seems to me to be the point at which Francis X. Gumerlock arrives in his work at its end, "*the Day and the Hour*" (note: *his* capitalization; published by American Vision in AD 2000).

Still, that is the book I'm recommending, right out of the gate, because here's what *I've* "gleaned from Gumerlock" in a statistical nutshell, while recognizing the implications that are naturally and logically derived from the raw, basic numbers;

1. The raw numbers first: the author details — by my count — no less than **546 FAILED** predictions (since the First Century AD, and made public in some manner) regarding the "last things" referred to in God's Word, the Holy Scriptures. As I write this in AD 2022, the 547th is about to fail like all of the others (one James T. Harmon hedged his bets with his predictions (plural) that the Rapture would occur in 2012 OR 2022, see page 326 of TDATH);
2. Breaking down the numbers further, we find that of these *known* predictions (made public somehow), 91 had already failed by AD 1000, 209 by 1500, 272 through 1600, 340 before AD 1700 was out, 400 before 1801 rolled in to begin the 19th Century, 460 before the 20th Century began, and 537 of the "prophecies" chronicled here had already fallen to the ground by the time Gumerlock published his findings in 2000;
3. Keeping in mind that at some point in AD 2000, he had to *stop* the collection process and get his work out to us, Gumerlock certainly can *not* be faulted for "missing" any predictions made since he wrote his well-researched book; you've got to draw the line somewhere, even though the predictions kept on coming, and will *continue* to be made by the Scripturally-ignorant among us. We are justified in assuming that — judging by past patterns — *dozens* (hundreds?) of new predictions were issued in the 20-22 years since, so the failed-prophecy count could easily be pushed to *well over 600* by the time of my writing in '22.

Continuing with observations on the simple statistical breakdown...

4. Some centuries yielded far more false predictions than others, and the trends can sometimes “jump off the page” and get the attention of even the most casual researcher. Examples:

a) Through the year 1200, *failed public* prophecies identified by Gumerlock had averaged about 10 per year (116 over Centuries 2 through 12); such predictions were few and far between, and mostly made by scholars, and it hadn't yet taken on the nature of a sport or an attention-getting mechanism;

b) The first *mini-explosion* of “end-times” predictions recorded by Gumerlock were made for the years 1207 through 1300 (end of the 13th C.), when 24 were supposed to land and failed to do so; this was only a hint at what was to follow;

c) Predictions pointing to the 14th C. (1301-1400) were 39 in number; re: the 15th C. (1401-1500), 30 came and went; re: the years 1501 through 1600 (16th C.) — the heart of the *Reformation* era — a full 62 had been issued and fallen flat, so would-be prognosticators stepped *UP* the pace to 69 for the 17th C. (1601-1700), added 60 more in *each* of the 18th and 19th Centuries, and really hit their flim-flam futurist stride with 77 flops for the years between 1901 and 2000 (including runs of 16 and 15 *consecutive* years, respectively, for *each and every year* from 1933 through 1948 and 1986 through 2000; in fact, with the *lone exception of 1985* — 26 out of 27 years — someone somewhere was sure that the “end of the world” would finally come in any given year between 1974 and 2000!

d) As previously mentioned, since Gumerlock's book was published about 22 years ago, there had to have been *scads* of “scud missiles” that failed to hit their targets, especially when one takes into account the expert-at-every-blog mindset that has prevailed for quite some time now; people are never going to stop making errant end-times predictions, and I do mean *never*! The subtitle of the Day and the Hour gets it oh-so right: “*Christianity's Perennial Fascination with Predicting the End of the World*” [bold emphasis mine]. False prophecies won't end.

So the problem that exists should be more than obvious: people are *always* going to be wrong about the timing of the “*eschaton*” — that is, the “Second Coming of Christ” and the “end of the world” and *all* of the related “last things.” If we merely take a glance at the timeline of human history since the First Century AD, when Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God and absolutely unique God-man, walked the earth in visible form — until His Ascension to join God the Father on the Heavenly throne, AD 30 — people in *every era since then* have convinced themselves that they need to convince all others that *they* have figured out just when Jesus would return and wrap up all of the “last things.”

Let me reiterate: in *EVERY* century since the *first* one, in which Jesus lived and labored on earth among His contemporaries — that *particular* generation of humanity — there have *always* been those who have made “bold” and insistent claims regarding the timing of His Return, The Judgment, the *supposed* “end of the world,” and everything related to those major events. *And ...* they have *always* been wrong; they always *will* be wrong because they continue to completely ignore the Biblical testimony ***IN CONTEXT***. This is the master-key that all of these would-be prophets have utterly failed to use.

In our opening chapter, the undeniable importance of examining the Scriptures *in context* — with that *general* term encompassing several more-specific aspects and angles — will be the focus.

But for now, in this introduction, let’s finish stating in full what the problem has always been: people with *finite* knowledge overall and *ZERO real* knowledge of the future — let’s just be honest! — have tried to put themselves at the “head of the class” by claiming to have pin-pointed *what all*-knowing (*omniscient*) God will do and *when* He will do it; as if they’ve bridged the gap between *finite/limited* human knowledge and the *infinite/unlimited* knowledge of the eternal God. *They’ve* figured out what has escaped millions of others spread out over thousands of years, they *alone*, in their God-like wisdom, or so they will tell all who will hear and be suitably impressed.

Well, count me among the *unimpressed*. *Anyone* can make a *failed* prediction, and anyone can believe a lie and count on it as truth. There are dire consequences attached to everything that is untrue, however, and what sane person won’t take some simple steps to avoid them? That’s a rhetorical question; we all *instinctively* know that life is all about pursuing the good and avoiding the bad at all costs.

So here’s another question that contains its own answer: Will you trust the one who does *not* know, but *professes* to know nonetheless, or the One who *does* know —

infallibly, inerrantly, with 100% accuracy? Only God knows *what* and *when*. Here is an ultra-pertinent passage from the Bible that's easily missed:

***“[And] a wise man’s heart discerns both time and judgment,
Because for every matter there is a time and judgment,
Though the misery of man increases greatly,
For he does not know **WHAT** will happen;
So who can tell him **WHEN** it will occur?”***

— Ecclesiastes 8:5b through 7, NKJV (all-caps emphasis mine)

Distilled a bit further, here is the NASB97 version of **Ecclesiastes 8:7**:

***“If no one knows **WHAT** will happen,
who can tell him **WHEN** it will happen?”***
(CAPS emphasis again mine)

Solomon is credited as the inspired writer of Ecclesiastes, and he points out here that the *true* prophet of God will never “split the baby” when it comes to prophecies about the future. *Half-right* will never do; **BOTH** *what* **AND** *when* must be proclaimed ahead of time and come true as predicted. In Biblical prophecy, there are no “hedged bets” or second chances or opportunities to “walk it back.” If you’re going to tell *God’s* people what *God* is going to do **AND** when *God* will carry out His plan, sometimes down to the last detail, you’d better make sure you’re saying exactly what *God* told you to say! The prophet that gets *any* part of it wrong is instantly and indelibly marked as a *false* prophet; what they said *obviously* did *not* come from God! And what did God say should happen to false prophets? Take up and read:

***“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name,
which I have **NOT** commanded him to speak, or who speaks
in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.”***

— Deuteronomy 18:20, NKJV (CAPS emphasis mine)

With reference to (false) “prophets” and “dreamers of dreams” *sent* by the LORD, but for the sole purpose of “testing” the children of Israel, thus said the LORD via Moses (**Deut 13:1-5**, NKJV):

***“But that prophet or dreamer of dreams shall be put to death,
because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the
LORD your God, ... So you shall put away the evil from your midst.”***

This death-sentence was indeed carried out in the Old Testament when false prophets had been exposed. In the most famous episode, Elijah's duel on Mount Carmel with the "four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table" (**1 Kings 18:19**), it did not go well for any of the 850, as Elijah had them *all* seized, taken down to the Brook Kishon, and duly executed (**1 Kings 18:40**). There were no "gray areas" involved in this matter, and God's justice was meted out on the spot.

We've already cited the first 5 verses of Deut 13, but just to make things *crystal*-clear, verses 6-11 continue in the same vein on the same topic, and more-specific details are spelled out. Paraphrasing this section, the unmistakable point is that *anyone* — *ANYone*, self-proclaimed prophet or not — brother/son/daughter/wife/best friend/*whoever* ... if *anyone* "*secretly* entices you" to go and serve other gods, you shall not consent to him, listen to him, pity him, *nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill him*. Further on, it's all equally clear: "You shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the LORD your God..."

Now that's some stern stuff! We can come to no other conclusion than the obvious one: In God's eyes, hellbound apostates *recruiting* other apostates is horrible idolatry that's worthy of death and without remedy. Though "prophets" true or false have been the main subject of discussion so far, here we see with profound clarity that even one's "bosom buddy" or his/her spouse that sought to pull any individual in an anti-God direction was guilty of "high treason" under Old Testament law toward God, the jealous Protector of His people. So how much *more* wrath will be heaped upon the *misleader* of not only an individual here or there, but *masses* of people and entire movements that transcend even nations?!

"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

— **Hebrews 10:31** (NASB97)

Such will be the unfathomably horrible fate toward which the false prophet steams. The false prophet wants to call undivided attention to himself — at *least* — and wants to control multitudes through fear and intimidation at worst. Either way, or somewhere in between those two poles, the false "soothsayers" are never going to be motivated to *help* people, give them *real* hope, or point them where they *need* to be pointed (away from self and toward the Savior). Because they lack the fear of the LORD that is the beginning of wisdom (**Proverbs 9:10**) and foolishly despise *true* wisdom and instruction (**Prov 1:7**), truth will *always* remain outside their grasp.

Having just referred to those false prophets that seek to control the “multitudes through fear and intimidation,” maybe I can make the Scriptural connection by looking again at Deuteronomy 18, and in this case, at the last verse of the chapter (**Deut 18:22**). In just about any translation, the last several words are the same:

“...you shall not be afraid of him.”

If we recall that the “him” in question here is someone who’s predicted something in the name of the LORD — as if he was speaking *for* God or in His very place — and whatever he’d predicted had *not* come true, God says of such a person, in effect, “What he’s said did *not* come from Me, but from My *opposition*.” And Jesus draws the battle lines quite clearly in **John 8:44**, where He tells the Pharisees that fervently sought to not only oppose Him and “cancel” His voice, but to *kill* Him ASAP:

“You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth BECAUSE THERE IS NO TRUTH IN HIM ... he is a liar and the father of lies.”

— **John 8:44**, NASB97 (all-CAPS emphasis mine)

Some brief observations on this text and how it ties in with Deut. 18 and what I’m suggesting here:

1. There is a Spirit of Truth that emanates from the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *and* there is the *anti*-God spirit, whom Jesus referred to as “the devil” ;
2. When we draw from the well of Truth, we get *only* truth, because God *can not* lie (**Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18, etc.**), whereas when we rely on the devil and his army of liars for truth, we only get *lies* because that’s all he has: “there is NO truth in him!” ;
3. Since the devil and his evil ilk know that there’s a good possibility that *we* know about his empty, rancid well, they must try to instill *fear* in us so that we obey them anyway, even though we’re “on” to him; sadly, many people respond more automatically to fear than to calm, steady logic and Biblical common sense, and they cower;
4. So when anti-God demons can’t give you a word of truth, but they *can* make themselves look like “awesome” objects of fear, God gently but firmly reminds us, “Do NOT be afraid of them.” All of the truth and all eternal power are on *God’s* side!

Another way to put this into proper perspective might be to compare and contrast eternal and holy God, the Creator, and a mere created and thoroughly evil being known as “the devil.” By what has already been said, we know that there is an *infinite* gulf of separation between The Deity and the demon when it comes to eternity, knowledge, power, holiness, and anything else you’d care to name. In a word, there is NO comparison between God and the devil, except that they are both *spirits*. Even in that respect, they are not even close to being equal. Consider the simple fact that God can be/IS present everywhere at once, and the devil can only be in one place at a time; that’s the *fact* of the matter, so if you’re one of those knuckleheads that tend to blame all of *YOUR* sins and evil inclinations on the devil, well, you’re gonna have to give up that shtick; that dog won’t hunt. **Jeremiah 17:9** says you’re wrong.

But not to lose sight of the immediate point, it should be reiterated: the devil is *not* on equal footing with God, so it’s never a battle between equals. The *default* position for human beings is to prefer the lies and ways of the devil and the *illusion* of “autonomy” — life lived *away* and out from under the rule of God — and thereby, to choose Death over Life. However, when the Holy Spirit enters a life, convicts that person of their all-pervasive sin and absolute need for a Savior, and applies salvation to that soul via God’s Word and exclusive trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, Life wins out, *every* time. Once again, the Holy Spirit can go anywhere He pleases, and the devil can not. God has the eternal advantage in any category, and the devil knows it.

This takes us back to the contrast in status between the *true* prophets of God — we can find them *all* in the pages of the Bible, God’s inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word — and *all* other prophets, *period*. I will say this plainly: I don’t believe that there are *any* modern-day apostles OR prophets making Holy Spirit-inspired predictions or still adding to the genuine canon of Scripture. Simply put, any candidates for either or both posts in the *true* church of Jesus Christ lack the credentials of the genuine Old Testament writers/prophets and New Testament Apostles and writers; today’s would-be “pillars” of the church do NOT carry the stamp of approval that authenticates *God’s* spokesmen as truly His, and that only *begins* with the spiritual gifts uniquely granted to Christ’s hand-picked and personally-trained apostles, all of whom had passed from the earthly scene before the end of the First Century AD.

Let me be achingly clear about this: While I love my Christian brothers and sisters of any denominational/*non*-denominational stripe, I don’t trust any of them when it comes to “foreseeing” the future or coming up with “new” Scriptures. I’ve been through the Bible, cover-to-cover, *at least* 15 times (and almost that many versions), and not once in the course of my reading and study has the thought occurred to me,

by way of the illuminating Spirit of God, “Hey, ya know what the Church needs today? *MORE* Scriptures. *MORE* continuing-NT writers from my *own* time that are able to speak to me more directly!” Not once, and not even close. The humble Christian who sits at the feet of Jesus with a singularly-focused willingness to learn from and about *Him, that's* my true brother and true sister. See what I mean here:

“*And He* [Jesus] *stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”*”

— **Matthew 12:50, NKJV**

One thing you should know about your author that will be helpful as you make your way (hopefully) through this book: I go by *God's* definitions, the *Biblical* definitions. While I'm probably more familiar with the theologian's standard nomenclature than most laymen, I'm not a slave to their categories, concepts, and constructs. For me, it's really easy to just take God at His Word, let the chips of the highly-trained theologians fall where they may. Only *God* is literally *awesome* by my reckoning, even though I readily admit that I'm not even a tenth the Christian man that Luther, Calvin, Knox, or Van Til were. Humanly speaking, I occupy a very low rung on the ladder, and all of my “heroes of the faith” will continue to be revered for what they *learned*, as well as what they *taught*. But *they* went by God's definitions, too, and that was what separated them from the throngs of theological pretenders.

INTRODUCTION, PART TWO: THE SIMPLE SOLUTION TO THE PERPETUAL PROBLEM

Governing maxims:

- 1. God's universe, God's rules; obey to prosper**
- 2. God's definitions, parameters, and guardrails;
stay within God's boundaries to stay on course toward the Truth**

Make no mistake: this is *God's* universe. *All* beauty, order, knowledge, and truth comes from The Creator, and the entire creation is 100% dependent on our triune God— ultimately — for any good thing to reach our souls. Chaos, lies, deception, and the ugliness of sin come from another source, however, and Jesus identified that first fallen angel as “the devil” and the very “*father* of lies” (see again **John 8**).

Let's review, quickly and honestly, some basic facts about *infinite*, almighty God and The Creator's most infamous opponent, the *finite, created being* known as Satan:

1. God is all-powerful (*omnipotent*) and all-knowing (*omniscient*) and the devil is neither; his power and knowledge are both limited by what God wills him to have in any given time or place; he too, like us, is subject to God's universal sovereignty
2. While God, The Holy Spirit, has unfettered access to the hearts and minds of human beings, the devil does not; *only God* can a) read our minds; b) honestly, effectively, and thoroughly inform us; and indeed, c) *convert* the helplessly hellbound to saints living eternally in Heavenly light
3. Jesus is THE Way, THE Truth, and THE Life (**John 14:6**), but Satan's ways can only lead to a lie-filled life and eternal death; you can't draw the water of life from an empty or poisoned well (Scriptural hints: **Proverbs 10:11, 13:14; Jeremiah 14:3; John 4:10-14, 7:37-39; 2 Peter 2:17**. These all point to the frustration and self-destruction that will always be attached to going to an empty or foul well for anything good). Jesus Christ = Life, Satan = Death.

Now, let's speak plainly by posing some more questions that answer themselves.

First of all, when you want to know something — *truly* know something — are you better off going to an ignorant wild-*guesser* or someone who *knows*? To One who not only knows the future, but has unlimited power to bring it to pass, or to one who — like yourself — has no control over the future and is blind to its nature and timing (what and when)?

Another thing or two: Would you rather go to One who will give you both the good *and* the bad news — the complete picture — or to one who feels the need — for whatever reason — to shortchange you one way or another (to one who will try to “finesse” the truth in order to make you feel better at that particular moment, the future *serious* consequences and ramifications notwithstanding)? People can remind me that I need to speak the truth in *love* better — that's readily acknowledged — but I can turn right around and remind my accusers that it's not all that loving to shade or *withhold* the truth, either! When we dispense *false* hope and offer invalid excuses that don't come from God, we simply are not doing well in God's eyes.

Finally, in the rhetorical question vein, there are these related *non-positives* (they are *self-evident*): 1) If you become aware of the stark contrast between the *track records* of consistent truth-teller Honest John and inveterate liar Ernie Evil, aren't you more inclined to continue to listen to Honest John, rather than turning to that known *fountain of falsity* (as if he's long overdue, so he just might accidentally shoot out a half-truth somewhere along the line)? And, ... 2) Should you really bang your head — *repeatedly* — against the wall, simply to feel “good” when you stop?

Peter used a different metaphor to make the same point — rooted in **Proverbs 26:11** — when he wrote about false teachers and prophets (and those they duped):

***“It has happened to them according to the true proverb,
‘A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,’ ...***

— **2 Peter 2:22**, NASB97, and he was quoting...

***“Like a dog that returns to its vomit
Is a fool who repeats his folly.”***

I don't think that we could come up with a metaphor that is both more disgusting *and* more instructive *because* it's so disgusting. Think about this for a few seconds: a dog — or a *human being*, as the Bible sees it in two places — would have to be *extremely* stupid or flat-out *desperate* in order to return to his vomit in hopes that *this* time, it might taste good and do the body good, despite all past evidence to the contrary!

But this is what the willfully ignorant continue to do: a false prophet misses the mark, misses again, and errs yet again, but has he exhausted his credibility with the gullible masses? *No!* Far from being stoned to death — and no, I'm not advocating for that — the false prophet is not only allowed to live and spew forth his worthless blathering, but he can go on making money off the dupes and even maintaining celebrity-cult status. [Do I really have to name names? Maybe later...]

We could pile up metaphors all day and in vain, but it all comes down to this: Why on earth would anyone seeking truth go to one who's never displayed the slightest familiarity with it, who couldn't tell the truth to save his own life? *Especially* when there *is* One who can shut down all arguments, speak nothing *but* truth, erase ignorance, and save His people from the woeful consequences they brought upon themselves by trusting the UNtrustworthy. To Whom shall we go for words of/about/leading to eternal life? To the *Lord* we must go (**John 6:68**).

And Who is it that not only *knows* the future, but *orders and controls* it? The book of Isaiah absolutely nails this down in passage after passage: **Isaiah 41:4, 21-26; 42:9; 43:11-13; 44:6-8; 45:5-7, 18-22**, and **55:9**: His ways are *infinitely* higher than ours!

NO “PLAN B” WITH GOD

Frankly, given the fact that all human beings are born with a certain amount of innate God-consciousness — or at least “God-*curiosity*,” there’s just no getting around it according to Paul in **Romans 1** — I think it’s time that we move on from the unassailable fact that God is perfect in all His *attributes* to the fact that God is also perfect in all His *ways*. That God’s way is always the *right* way, the most appropriate and most efficient way, should be another “no-brainer” for any true Christian. In God’s eternal design, there is no lack, no room for “slack,” and there is *never* a “Plan B!” Take *note*, dispensationalists, **2 Peter 3:9**; you might want to re-read **Isaiah 40** through **45** in order to “get your mind right” about what “*NOT* slack” means.

I’ve said/written this many times before (starting *decades* ago), but since I don’t expect any of you to hang on to my pronouncements or set your clocks by them, I’ll put it out there again:

Six words that have never been or never *will* be heard by the attendant angels in God’s Heavenly Throne Room (said *by* God): “Wow, I didn’t see *that* coming!”

For a thinking, discerning Christian, that statement might seem to be totally devoid of humor, in that it puts words into God’s “mouth” that can never belong there; the scenario is ludicrous, but not *funny*. I didn’t say that to make a joke, but to make a point that should be obvious: God knows all, sees all, and orchestrates all according to His unalterable and holy will. To claim that some event took God by surprise is, once again, *ludicrous*, if not outright blasphemous.

Still, ... what did I hear some “pundit” say — not two weeks ago from the time I write these words — that the turn of events involving Russia, Ukraine, and NATO allies, including the U.S. — was just so bizarre that “I bet even *God* didn’t see this coming!” Now, I don’t know if this talking head was trying to be cute or going for a catchy “sound byte,” or just *mis*-speaking like a careless jackass, but in any case, I didn’t see the humor in it. I’m guessing that I wasn’t the *only* one to pick up on that or hear it the way *I* did, so I just hope that the damage done was minimal (by God’s grace and protection of His endangered children from such “friendly fire”).

Please, professing Christians, stop it! There’s nothing attractive, cute, or productive about “humorously” and carelessly pulling God down to *our* inept, pathetic level.

One other thing that dovetails with this: while it may have been more of a nervous “slip” than anything else (by that commentator), anyone who’s been exposed to dispensationalist end-times teaching — *wait*, what am I saying, it’s *always* about the end-times with that bunch of self-promoters, so that’s *redundant* — but anyone familiar with their “Plan B” system-design knows full well that their whole scheme depends on God’s *failure* to foresee, or at least, to *execute* His original plan! So, never mind all of the confusing charts and individually-nuanced schemes, the *general* scheme requires God’s “false start!”

To any reader who might happen to *be* a dispensationalist, I urge you to consider what Paul wrote to the Galatians (**Gal. 4:16**): “***So have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?***” Will you continue to believe — in an unsatisfying state of cognitive dissonance — that a scaled-down, less-than-omnipotent and less-than-omniscient, do-over “god” is the same God Who is self-described in The Holy Bible? A “god” that can be thwarted by another being or force is *still* God Almighty?

In which deity can you place your trust: the triune, *perfect* God Who inhabits the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Scriptures, or the “god” that is the imperfect product of sin-addled imagination? I should think that anyone who *has* heard and *truly ingested* the meat of God’s ages-enduring message would be well-equipped by the Holy Spirit to discern the crucial differences between God and man-made, illusory idols (**2 Tim. 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12**). Remember, professing Christian, that not only things made with *hands* can be idols. Anything made by *minds* can just as easily be a soul-slating idol, and that most certainly includes any “Christian” scheme that attempts to both re-mold the past and irreverently and presumptuously play with the future. Most importantly, the dispensationalist scheme robs God of His due honor, and that simply can not and will not stand.

In **Hosea 4:17**, we can find some advice that extends in application beyond its original context: “***Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.***” In the original context, “Ephraim” is used to symbolize the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel, all of which were in idolatrous rebellion toward God. Too many Israelites were eager to join — we might even say, “wed” — the worship of the true God with the ritualistic and *idolatrous* Baal-worship of the Canaanites; all *sorts* of idols were involved there, and their “harlotry” (**verses 11, 14, 15, and 18** of chapter 4) was both physical and spiritual. *Nothing* good could come of it, so God warned His people (a remnant) to avoid any proximity to that whole soul-stealing vortex of evil.

So how does this apply to dispensational theory? *Nothing* good can come from *that* either. All you have to do to see that this is true is to consider the overall effect: *God’s glory* is tarnished by it, and tarnished to the degree that He no longer can be

God (at all). The imperfect “god” of dispensationalism is an embarrassing, almost pitiable *failure*; he *meant* to do good, but he failed to actually *do* the good he’d intended and *when* he’d intended to do it. Now, I ask you: is that *your* God? Stack the true, living God against this hand-made god that has to be constantly propped up by an army of philosophical Philistines (read: *dispensationalist systematizers*, or more plainly, *false teachers and false prophets*). That’s a Dagon-type “god” (**1 Samuel 5**).

So rather than hating me because I tell you the truth, avoid “Ephraim” and live! The same choices are always before us, from the children of Israel in the wilderness to the present generation of our contemporaries, and to all that follow us: God’s good way that leads to life eternal, or all other ways that lead to eternal death. We see this clear dichotomy in passages such as **Deut 30, Joshua 24, Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25**, and **Matthew 7:13**. Throughout the Scriptures, our loving, benevolent, and *faithfully protective* God advises, admonishes, entreats, pleads, commands and scolds — as needed and where appropriate, according to His matchless wisdom — in order to keep us on the only path that promises, and indeed, *delivers* us to the unending life of happiness beyond this sin-soaked vale of tears. We are utter fools to think that there is either a “good” way that God doesn’t know about or that God really *doesn’t* know the way to the perfect destination; He IS the Way (**John 14:6**).

The **main points at this juncture** are simply the following. Jesus Christ is:

- ◆ the **only** trustworthy and faithfully protective guide on the path of and *to* truth, the *True Shepherd* (**John 10, 14:6**);
- ◆ the **only** mediator approved by the Father (**1 Timothy 2:5** and **Hebrews 9:15**);
- ◆ the **chief** Prophet and **chief** Apostle (hear *Him*, **Deut 18:15-19** and **Acts 3:22-26; John 1:45; Ephesians 2:20** and **1 Corinthians 3:11**);
- ◆ the **only** God-man, who, as a true human being, understands human needs and frailties, and as true God, can NOT lie (**Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18, Numbers 23:19**);
- ◆ therefore, considering all of the above, the **only pure** source of prophetic truth, and the limitless well of living waters that we can’t live without (**John 4:10-13**).

So I ask any reader: Why would you turn to anyone else, other than the **only** One Who knows the way, knows your needs along the way, protects you from harm to the point of self-sacrifice because of His *undying* love, and knows the future, inside-out? I think that any logical soul will come to the realization that God is “all about” keeping each of His blood-bought children on the path that unerringly leads onward and upward.

RAISING THE TOPIC IN THE TITLE: GUARDRAILS

Let's talk about those *guardrails*, then, the ones alluded to in the title of this book, because a big part of the loving protection that God provides for this vast group of sojourners on the route to the top can be metaphorically described as “funnelers” if you will, or as effective **barriers to prevent destruction** that would result from deviation *off* the path. I like this metaphor for a number of reasons, beginning with an anecdote in the form of a “travelogue snapshot,” but others will follow.

Several decades ago, my (earthly) father drove our family station wagon up the dusty Pike's Peak road that took folks right to the top. As I recall — I believe this was in 1968 — the road was UNpaved (there's your *dust*), winding and full of switchbacks, and in many places, *not* hemmed in by sturdy steel guardrails. At least, *Dad* would've liked to have seen more of those in place, what with his precious cargo aboard and all, consisting of the love of his life and four active, squirmy products of their union. But since my memory can sometimes play tricks on me, I consulted an article found online that describes the current annual *race* to the top called, “the Pike's Peak International Hill Climb.” Here are some corroborating excerpts from that web page; note the history of the road itself: [source = www.pikes-peak.com/pikes-peak-international-hill-climb-reference-guide/]

*“... the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb is a race like no other. Drivers must battle **tight curves and switchbacks (the course boasts 156 turns in 12.42 miles), lengths with no guardrails and huge drop-offs, an ascension of 4,725 feet in elevation** and, to complete the challenge, a reduction in oxygen that impacts both driver and combustion vehicles the higher they climb ...”*

*“If you think that's wild, consider this: **There was a time when portions of the race were unpaved. Imagine careening around those hairpin turns with no guarantee the road wouldn't slip out from under you. Clearly the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb is not a race for the faint of heart.**”*

*“It was first promoted by Spencer Penrose, who we also credit with **turning the dirt carriage route into the wide and visitor-friendly Pikes Peak Highway.**” [Where was Mr. Penrose back in '68?]*

*“And, while everyone likes to win, there's a certain esteem that comes with completing a race as technically difficult and challenging as the Hill Climb. It's kind of like completing a marathon. Even if you don't win, you're still **awesome** for running 26.2 miles. The same goes for **getting your car to the summit of America's favorite mountain.**” [You done good, Dad!]*

It seems, then, that my memories of that ascent still hold up as reliable, especially when the historical details that back me up have been provided in print: there *was* a time before the inaugural race, when *non-racers* could make their way to the top on an *unpaved*, merely-dirt (in places, at least) road, and even *today*, the hairpin turns, switchbacks, and sections *lacking guardrails* still exist. I got the basics right, didn't I?

So the picture should be fairly clear: Everyone in our car had no problem recognizing that the guardrails were a *good* idea, *much*-welcomed, and there for our protection. Because even if we were to “bounce off” those rails *inwardly* and sustain some damage, it would certainly beat getting a couple of wheels out over an unguarded edge, and over we'd helplessly go for our very *last* ride! Guardrails are a huge *blessing*!

Our loving Father, in His infinite wisdom, and in unfathomable grace toward His children, has provided “guardrails” that are embedded in His informative, instructive, protective, and *salvific* Word. The Apostle Peter rightly said to Jesus, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (**John 6:68**, NKJV). God's Word is indeed *salvific*; if we heed it, it will be the means used to point us to Christ and no other, and thus we'll be saved. We'll be saved from venturing out over the edge, past the point of no return, and we'll be spared the inevitable consequences of not staying within our own lane for our own good.

Sure, it would be nice if we humans could trust each other to the extent that we can and *must* trust in God, but God is the *source* of all knowledge, and *our* knowledge is ever and only *derivative*, as well as woefully *spotty*. And, yes, I suppose that it would be “cool” to have Spirit-driven and Spirit-inspired apostles and prophets among us in the present time, but consider for a moment how hopelessly confused we'd all be. If the canon of Scripture — via these modern-day “apostles” and “prophets” — kept expanding like the British *unwritten* constitution (it's all over the place in an ungathered collection of legal precedents, unlike our own U.S. Constitution, a copy of which can be carried around in pocketbook form), chaos would *reign*, and *against* the testimony of **1 Cor 14:33**, “For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” (NKJV)

Sorry, Christian folks, but you can't have it both ways. You can't be churning out new “scriptures” while — at the same time — standing on the firm, *unchanging* Word of God. So this is one of those guardrails we're talking about: God has spoken, His words have been faithfully recorded and disseminated for over 1,950 years now, and, just as there is no “Plan B,” there will be no “*Scripture 2.0!*” If this idea is offensive to you, I humbly suggest that you should re-check your priorities. It just may be that you're more “into” or “about” Self than the true God and *His* ways.

None of the glory belongs to you, me, a church “leader” or worship-team member, a Christian “artist,” or a celebrated author of “end-times” books. ***Soli Deo gloria: glory to God alone.*** If you can say that honestly and without holding back, you are probably on the right path and have your priorities straight. If you have a “*Yeah, but...*” to add to that, you are definitely in need of a course correction.

It’s never really about *any* of us in any time beyond the Apostolic era, in which God *authenticated His* gospel-bearers and His *true* prophets by speaking directly through them and their Holy Spirit-inspired writings, and by granting them healing powers (*instantaneous and permanent*) that were *unmistakably* granted, and *only* then. I have to say that I’m reminded of the king-demanding Israelites (1 Samuel 8) whenever I see any of my contemporaries touting this “prophet” or that “end-times predictor” as the real deal, as if we have the right to name, install, and honor a sort of official “Prophet Laureate”: “No, but we WILL have a prophet over us!” Read and compare **1 Sam 8:19**; see what I mean? And who were they *really* rejecting? Read **8:7!**

Maybe we should refer back to the first pages of this introduction to bring the point home. Remember how many failed end-times predictors/false prophets have been exposed by the mere passage of time? No, I don’t mean the *exact* number; the correct answer to the question is simply, “*All* of them.” Which is to say that outside of Jesus and His personally-trained and divinely-inspired apostles, only those Old Testament prophets and New Testament writers that were similarly divinely-inspired were ever going to be right about both the “what” and the “when” of events future to them. And please pay close attention to how that was stated: events future to *them*; this is another master key that’s rarely employed and almost always ignored.

The quickest way to get it all *wrong* is to leap right over the twin guardrails of ***context*** and ***audience relevance***. “Someone will say, ..” — Paul often starts to answer an anticipated objection in this manner — “What is *audience relevance*? Is that even a real thing?” [I’ll admit that’s an updated, more-colloquial-than-usual Paul, but bear with me as we go forward].

As hinted at earlier, the first full chapter (the next major section) will be devoted to more of a deep dive into several concepts directly related to *context*, only one of which is this idea of *audience relevance*. By merely looking at the two words involved here, the compound term becomes virtually self-defining: *what* the speaker is saying is most *relevant* to *whom*? Which *audience* is at the receiving end of the message? Or, put still another way: Who should be paying the most attention because the subject matter will most directly affect *them*? And finally, to whom do the specific elements of the speech apply? To the people within the reach of the speaker’s voice or to every person in every place, and in every time? I hope this helps to zero in on this

important component of context, but even so, an extremely *relevant* illustration of what is meant by audience relevance can be found in the parallel accounts of **Matthew 16:27-28, Mark 8:38-9:1, and Luke 9:26-27.**

Starting with Mark's version that features possibly the most questionable chapter break in the entire Bible (ending chapter 8 in mid-discourse and beginning the next chapter as if the whole setting had changed), we *do* see in verse **34** of chapter **8** the following: "When He had called **the people** to *Himself*, **with His disciples also, He said to them, ...**" [bold-faced emphasis mine, citing NKJV] (and the passage continues without interruption until said misplaced chapter break at the end of verse **38**). Did you catch the clue this time? Or were you way ahead of me on that score, and it didn't take *you* over a dozen read-throughs of the Bible before it sank in: that in both of the parallel accounts of the same incident — Mt 16 and Lk 9 — the phrase, "Some of you standing here..." includes not only "The Twelve" (closest disciples, but a larger group of "the people" *in addition to* Christ's hand-picked 12. This is a point that can hardly be over-emphasized, so please don't miss it. Let's take a closer look, by way of a short list of crucial and highly relevant observations:

- When Jesus goes on to say, "***Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power***" (Mark 9:1) or, "***But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God***" (Luke 9:27), or, "***Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom***" (Matt 16:28), we can now assert with confidence that the *audience* to whom Jesus was speaking — the full number of those ***standing there within the sound of His voice on that day in AD 30*** — was definitely larger than 12 individuals. We're not given names of those beyond the twelve, but we know that what Jesus (God) said was true in every respect, and that Mark (inspired by God, the Holy Spirit), was telling the truth, too, about who was in the audience on this specific occasion.
- If we can agree that "shall not/will not taste death" means what we think it means — that some of those standing there ***would not die*** till (until) ***they saw*** the kingdom of God "present with power" or "the Son of Man coming in His kingdom," ***this passage sets up some definite parameters with regard to the timing*** of the arrival of Jesus, returning in the power of His eternal kingdom.
- Considering that we really have only two ways to interpret what's maintained here by *three* divinely-inspired gospel writers, we can quickly eliminate one of those possibilities in an instant: either there are some who were standing there in

AD 30 who are *still* alive today — they have *not* tasted death, and are somewhere close to 2,000 years old! — *o-o-o-r-r-r* Jesus DID come into His kingdom “in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father’s, and of the holy angels” (**Luke 9:26**); “...in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (**Mark 8:38**); He DID “come in the glory of His Father with his angels” and it was at that time that He DID “reward each according to his works” (**Matt 16:27**). The choice is clear: God knew both *what* and *when*, and He flawlessly performed all of the “what” at the *time* He’d flawlessly predicted. Some First-Century people DID live to see those monumental events, but *obviously*, they aren’t *still* alive in this *far-far*-removed generation!

- Some (too many!) have futilely tried to connect the Transfiguration of Jesus (that followed about a *week later*, according to these same 3 gospel writers) with His “coming in power/into His kingdom.” In other words, they’ve forgotten: 1) what they’d just read about *some* standing there not tasting death before that would occur (the texts all imply that most, but not all *would* taste death, according to the prediction, but *no* text reports that *any* had died in that short, one-week period), and 2) where are the *angels* in the Transfiguration? (they *did* figure prominently in each of the three parallel accounts of Jesus coming in glory, however); clearly, these are two different events, and they’re separated by *decades*.
- ♦ Again, to whom is Jesus speaking in what is probably the last year of His earthly ministry (AD 30 at the *latest*, in other words)? “When He had called **the people** to *Himself*, **with His disciples also, He said to them, ...**” (**Mark 8:34**). Context demands that the answer to the question doesn’t come out of left field and introduce an entirely *different* scenario, such as one that involves Jesus suddenly talking to 21st-Century Americans who *never ever* stood there — where Jesus and His audience were standing in the *First* Century — and promising to *us* that some of *us* would live to see Him returning in His own glory, and in the glory of His Father, with His holy angels! We must get over ourselves; we are *not* the “terminal” generation, and none of us were among those to whom Jesus promised to return! If we stick to the Scriptural texts and stop listening to those seeking to build themselves up by exploiting a growing throng of followers, the *noise* can be separated from the signal of Truth *instantly*.

The simple solution is right there in front of us, just as it was to *every* generation since the generation to whom Jesus spoke: Listen to the only Persons who *know* both *what* will happen and *when* it will happen! The chain of communication starts with All-Knowing God Almighty and links to all those who were directly and divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit, including Jesus in his humanity, His personally-chosen, personally-taught apostles (excepting only the “son of perdition,” Judas

Iscariot, see **John 17:12**), and all of the Biblical writers. Any specific and unmistakably *true* predictions about the future are necessarily going to come from this ultra-select group of God's highly-credentialed emissaries. And none of their predictions can be applied where King Context has been bound and gagged or exiled to an unknown and barren land. Exit context, enter confusion; it's just that simple.

Just suppose you were on THE Path of Truth, following the ONLY True Guide and Shepherd, and definitely headed toward your eternally-secure Home. You've seen the wolves come and go, some of which were *obviously* fended off by the Good Shepherd, and some of which destroyed themselves when their disguise slipped enough to expose them for what they really were. But then, just a bit *off* the path, on a path that runs parallel — for a *while*, anyway — to The Path you're on, another “new” “shepherd” starts to get your attention with his smiling demeanor and aura of embodying advanced, esoteric knowledge; he seems to know of a better way to get to a better destination. Why not hop the fence and explore the newer/better path, or at least, check it out to see where it leads? What harm could come from *that*, right? *This* guide certainly doesn't *look* like a wolf, and lots of people seem to like and trust him; he's been around long enough to have earned the respect of the people, so how can I say that *I* know any better than my fellow brothers and sisters? Yep, that settles it; over the fence you go. *You* say, toward happiness, *God* says, toward destruction. If there is only one way to the Father and Jesus Christ IS that Way (**John 14:6**), does it ever make sense to seek another way?

If Jesus IS the Truth embodied, does it ever make sense to seek “truth” from another source that can't provide it like only He can?

If we know — because Jesus told us — that the wider, more-accessible path offered by the sin-soaked world and the devil himself is the path that can *only* lead to eternal destruction, would it make sense to take even “exploratory” steps on that path? How do we ever know that the *next* step won't be the *last* step?

***“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide
and the way is broad that leads to destruction,
and there are many who enter through it.
For the gate is small and the way is narrow
that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”
— Matthew 7:13-14, NASB97***

Jesus is our metaphorical *narrow* and *exclusive* gate. If by God's grace you've found this Way, by all means stay on the path!

May every reader of these lines be found trusting in Christ alone and on The Way to the Father when their last step is taken. Any honest assessor of how much God has done to keep all of His people on The Path that leads to eternal life will recognize at least these basics:

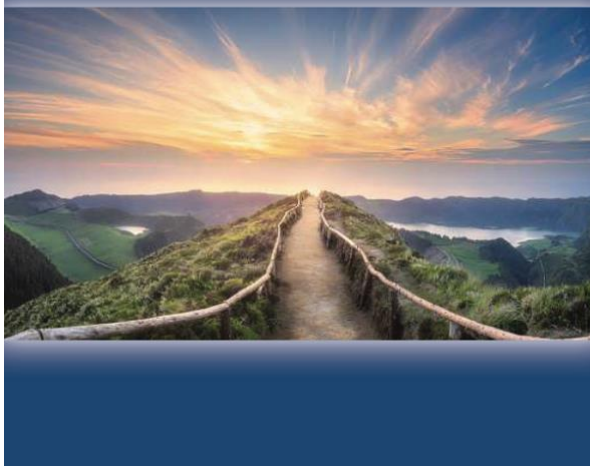
1. He has appointed ONE Mediator and inerrantly faithful, Good Shepherd: Christ Jesus (**1 Timothy 2:5** and **John 10:11-18**);
2. He has made it clear that *over and above all others*, we are to hear His Son, the Chief Priest, Chief Prophet, Chief Apostle and Cornerstone, and sole Head of His Church; Hear *Him* (**Deut 18:15-19**; **Luke 3:22**; **Eph 2:20**; **1 Cor 3:11**; **John 6:68**);
3. He has given us the once-for-all-delivered faith (**Jude 3**) in the written form of His holy, enduring, and unchanging Word, the Bible (**Isa 40:8**);
4. He has given to His people the Infallible Inspirer and Illuminator — the Holy Spirit — to keep us focused on the Truth (**John 14:16-17, 16:13**);
5. He has appointed the human writers through whom the Holy Spirit has delivered the very words of God (**2 Peter 1:21**; **2 Tim 3:16-17**);
6. He reaches hearts — via the undeniable Holy Spirit — that can't be reached by *any* created beings in the same way (remember, that includes Satan, who is by no means omnipresent *or* omniscient); see **Hebrews 4:12**, **Eph 6:17**, and **Acts 5:4** (there's no fooling God, the Holy Spirit!);
7. Finally, every one of the Ten Commandments, and *every* commandment, warning, admonishment, course-correction, or piece of advice issued by God to humans has been for our *protection and secure advancement along the path of truth to the truth*. All of these *means of protection* are virtual guardrails that have been graciously supplied by our loving and benevolent Father. None of God's rules, parameters, and boundaries will do us harm or steal our joy in life. They all make sense, keep us from harm, and confer knowledge essential for abundant life on earth and eternal life in Heaven.

Reviewing our governing maxims:

1. God's universe, God's rules; obey to prosper
2. God's definitions, parameters, and guardrails;
stay within God's boundaries to stay on course toward the Truth

If all of the above elements on this page and throughout this introduction can be distilled into a summarizing sentence, the “simple solution to the perpetual problem” would be simply this: *Fully* heed God, in *all* of His counsel; fully obey Him in *all* of His ways; strive always to *stay on His appointed true path*, and with specific regard to fulfillments of *prophecy*, look for those where *God* has indicated in His Word.

Revelation's GUARDRAILS



It's distressing to see so many otherwise-faithful Christians not taking Jesus Christ and all of the Holy Spirit-inspired New Testament writers at their word when it comes to the "last things." This book strives to correct that great error.

Revelation's Guardrails

By Steve Rauen

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